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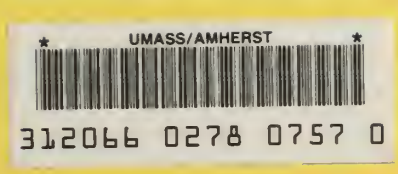

CTPS TECHNICAL REPORT 53b

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SPECIAL-NEEDS TRANSPORTATION EVALUATION: Analysis of the User Survey

January 1986

CTPS TECHNICAL REPORT 53b

TITLE SPECIAL-NEEDS TRANSPORTATION EVALUATION: ANALYSIS OF THE USER SURVEY

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DATE JANUARY 1986

ABSTRACT In March 1982, the MBTA discontinued its daytime many-to-many paratransit service within the downtown Boston area, and replaced it with an accessible fixed-route van service called the Downtown Distributor (discontinued in May 1985). Users were surveyed in March 1984 concerning their use of the revised service, their use of available paratransit, and their feelings about other, possible service changes. In the same survey, inquiries were made about users' socioeconomic characteristics. This study reports on the findings from this survey.

This document was prepared by **CENTRAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING STAFF**, an interagency transportation planning staff created and directed by the Metropolitan Planning Organization, consisting of the member agencies.

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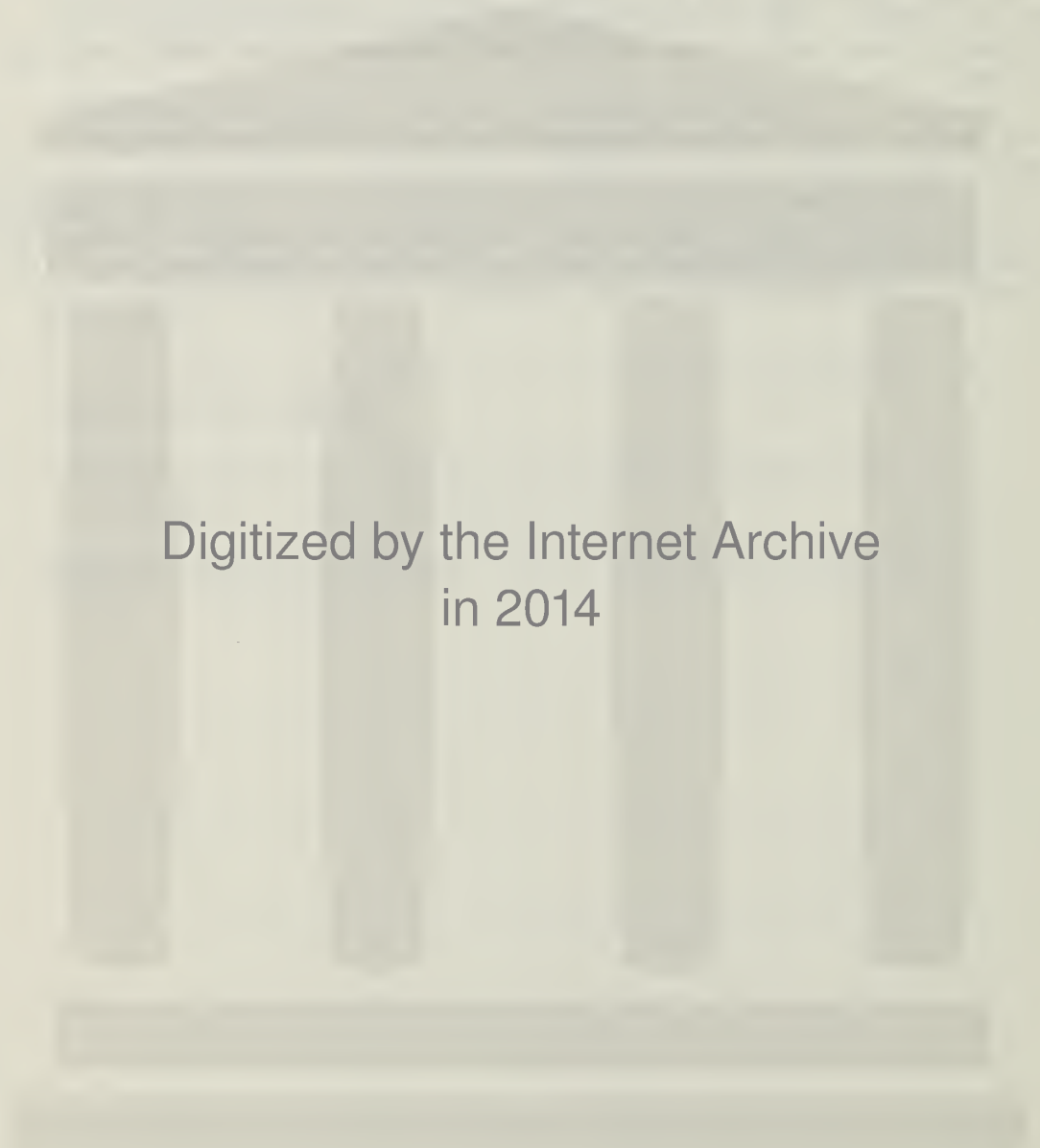

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SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a survey undertaken in March 1984 of users of THE RIDE and the Downtown Distributor, transportation systems for the mobility impaired. The survey was designed to gather information in the following four areas:

- The socioeconomic background of the users
- The users' assessment of the quality of service
- The usage patterns and stated needs of the users
- Users' suggestions for improving service

This analysis gauges users' perceptions, and is not meant to be construed as an empirical evaluation of THE RIDE or the Distributor. An empirical analysis of these services is provided in the companion study, Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation: Service Characteristics and Vehicle Productivity of THE RIDE and the Downtown Distributor (CTPS Technical Report 53a, September 1985). These companion studies share certain conclusions about the services; there are certain conflicts between the evaluations. When appropriate, these agreements or conflicts are brought to the reader's attention.

Included in the findings are the following salient points:

- Nearly 60% of the survey respondents are older than 65 years of age, and over 40% are 75 or older.
- Income of the respondents is low: 40% earn less than $5,000 per year (in 1984 dollars).
- Sixty percent of the respondents live in single-person households.
- Generally, users are satisfied with most aspects of service. Out of a possible rating of 5 points, all categories of service attained at least a 3.9 rating, and a value of 4.6 was reached for "driver's courtesy." Wheelchair users tended to rate service characteristics a little less high than non-wheelchair users: the highest score given was 4.3, for driver courtesy; and the lowest score given was 3.6, for "How easy is it to get through to a reservation clerk?" (as opposed to 3.9 for non-wheelchair users).

- Respondents reported that 77% of RIDE pick-ups are made within 10 minutes of the scheduled time. Independent, empirical data indicate this to be an underestimate. Actually, 85% of trips are made within 10 minutes of scheduled time.

- Despite general satisfaction with overall service, 78% of the respondents do not use the Downtown Distributor. Of the 22% who do use this service, nearly all (90%) telephone in advance to notify the scheduler of the trip they wish to make. Furthermore, 65% of those who had used the Downtown Distributor now make these trips during the daytime off-peak period so as to avoid the fixed-route system.

- Of all trips, 44% are for work purposes, while only 15% of all respondents are employed.

- When asked to select preferred changes which could be made to the service, the respondents gave the highest rating to immediate trip-request confirmation.

This report concludes with recommendations for future action, including the institution of a computer-assisted scheduling system, a change in scheduling policy, operational changes in the Downtown Distributor and promotion of greater public awareness of the services.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has run a special-needs transportation service called "THE RIDE" since 1977. In March 1982, changes were made in the provision of service to the downtown area with the institution of the Downtown Distributor, a fixed-route bus service.[1] The service area is shown in Figure 1-1.

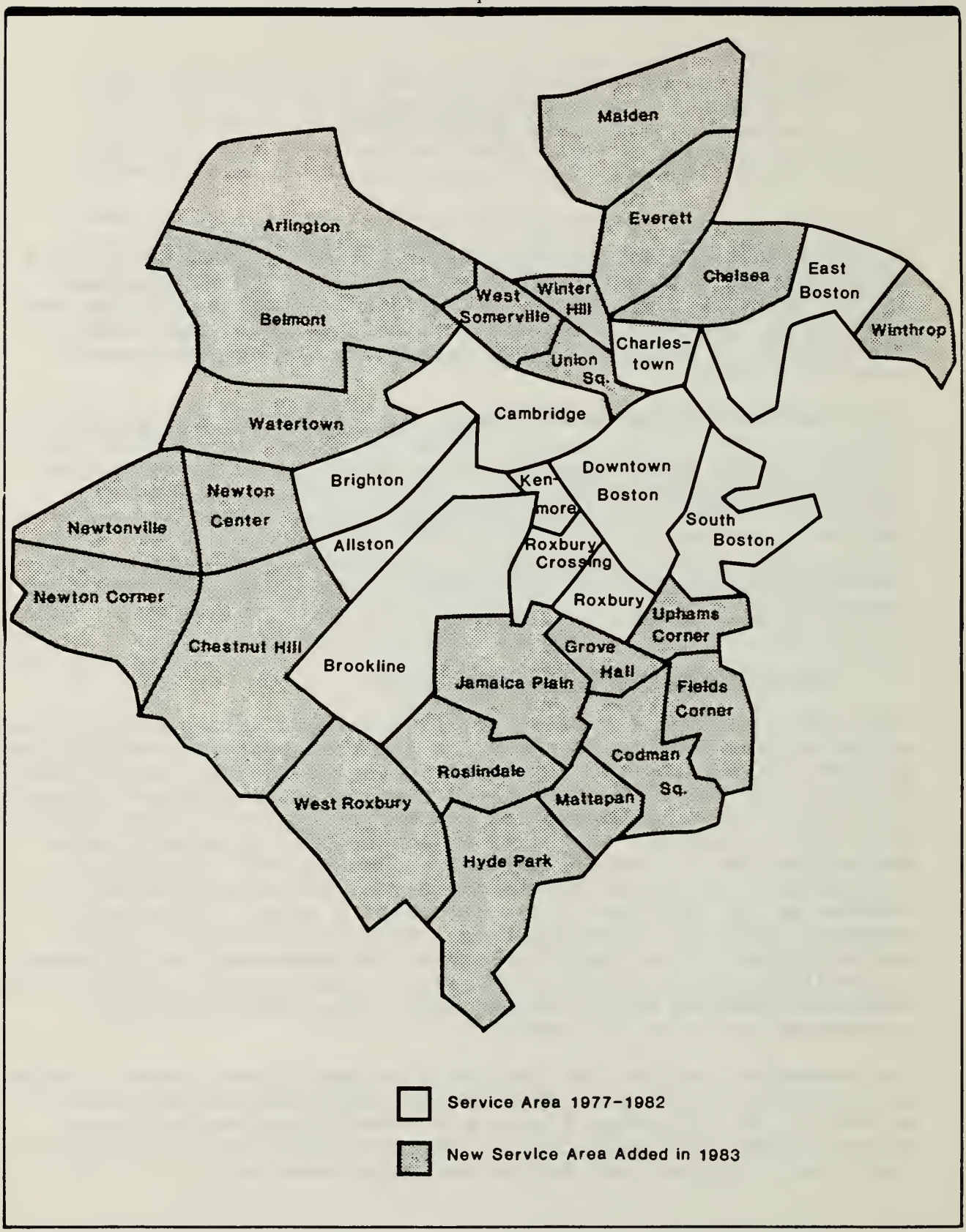
CTPS has been requested to examine the efficiency and quality of these services. This report focuses on users' subjective evaluations of the MBTA's special-needs services, as reflected in a survey conducted in March 1984. An analysis of the survey results is followed by presentations of conclusions and recommendations. For an empirical evaluation of these services, which employs such service measures as on-vehicle travel time, trip distance, passenger-trips per vehicle, etc., see CTPS Technical Report 53a.

1.1 THE RIDE AND DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR

THE RIDE consists of a fleet of lift-equipped vans and mini-buses which provide door-to-door service for transportation-handicapped persons between any two locations in the designated service area. To travel on THE RIDE, registered users make a telephone request from 1 to 7 days in advance of the day of travel. Those requests which are received 3 to 7 days in advance are gathered 2 days before the day of travel, sorted, and scheduled. Users are telephoned 1 or 2 days before the day of travel and informed of whether or not they have been allocated a trip. Those trip requests which are received 1 or 2 days in advance are called add-on trips; an add-on-trip request is scheduled, and the user is notified at the scheduler's earliest opportunity. Add-on-trip requests received on the day of travel are handled by the dispatcher on an *ad hoc* basis.

For users who require the service 3 or more times a week to make a round trip to the same destination, subscription service is offered. In this case, riders are normally guaranteed these trips without having to phone in advance each time. At present there is a waiting list for subscription service.

[1] Downtown Distributor service was discontinued in May 1985, when this report was in draft form.



N Not to Scale

SERVICE AREA OF THE RIDE

CTPS

FIGURE 1-1

Technical Report 53b
January 1986

The Downtown Distributor is a fixed-route, lift-equipped bus service operating along two loop routes in the downtown area on weekdays. RIDE users wanting to travel into downtown Boston from surrounding areas, and vice versa, must transfer from one vehicle to another at either the Massachusetts General Hospital or South Station. Service users traveling completely within the downtown area can board at any location on the fixed route by flagging down the vehicle, and can be dropped off at any location along the route.

In January 1984, the MBTA changed the Downtown Distributor's hours of operation, due to low usage and users' complaints. Previously, it had been in operation from 7:00 AM to 5:15 PM. Now its service was curtailed to morning and afternoon peak hours only. Where it is necessary to make the distinction in this report, the Downtown Distributor service before this change will be referred to as the old Distributor, and the service after this change as the new Distributor.

In September 1981, six months before the Distributor's implementation, roughly 39% of all scheduled passenger-trips involved the downtown area as either a trip origin or destination. Given that beginning in March 1982 all trips entering or leaving the downtown were required to use the Distributor, it is fair to say that roughly this same percentage of all scheduled trips was affected by the start of Distributor service.

The Downtown Distributor was to have served several ends. First, due to the level of funding in fiscal-year 1982, the MBTA was forced to implement cost-saving measures. The start of Distributor service permitted the use of a smaller general fleet because the Distributor was to have improved overall service efficiency by limiting to two the number of vehicles operating in heavy downtown traffic. Second, the Distributor was to have provided regular, fixed-route, accessible-vehicle service to patrons using the accessible heavy rail at Park Street Station and to patrons of existing accessible, fixed-route bus service operating from Haymarket Station. Third, fixed-route service was to have eliminated the need for users to make advance reservations by phone.

1.2 THE SURVEY

In March 1984, a survey of users was conducted to collect information on the following:

- The socioeconomic characteristics of the users
- The users' assessment of the quality of service
- The usage patterns and stated needs of the users
- Users' suggestions for improving service

Results will be presented for these four areas in chapter 2, and conclusions in chapter 3.

This was a postage-paid, mail-back survey. Questionnaires were distributed by mail to all currently active users of THE RIDE (approximately 2,500). For vision-impaired users, a large-print questionnaire was available. In addition, surveys were conducted on the phone for those who requested it. A total of about 500 questionnaires were completed and returned to CTPS. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

One in five questionnaires was returned for analysis, producing a return rate of 20%. This rate is considered to be quite good for a mail-back questionnaire (a mail-back questionnaire was distributed by mail to users of the Southeast Expressway in Boston in the fall of 1984; the return rate for this survey was on the order of 1%). The user survey sample size is sufficiently large and the return rate sufficiently high to create confidence in the survey's results.

It should be borne in mind that the survey sample may or may not be random. There was no control for creating a representative sample from all returned questionnaires because there is no recent socioeconomic data from which to develop one. As a consequence, survey results are carefully expressed as sample results that are not necessarily representative of all currently registered RIDE and Distributor users.

2 SURVEY RESULTS

2.1 SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE USERS

Place of Residence

The geographic distribution of respondents' homes is shown in Figure 2-1. Although Brookline and Brighton make up a relatively small portion of the service area, they provided 28% and 12%, respectively, of the total survey response. For a listing of all communities by number of resident respondents, see Table B-1 in Appendix B.

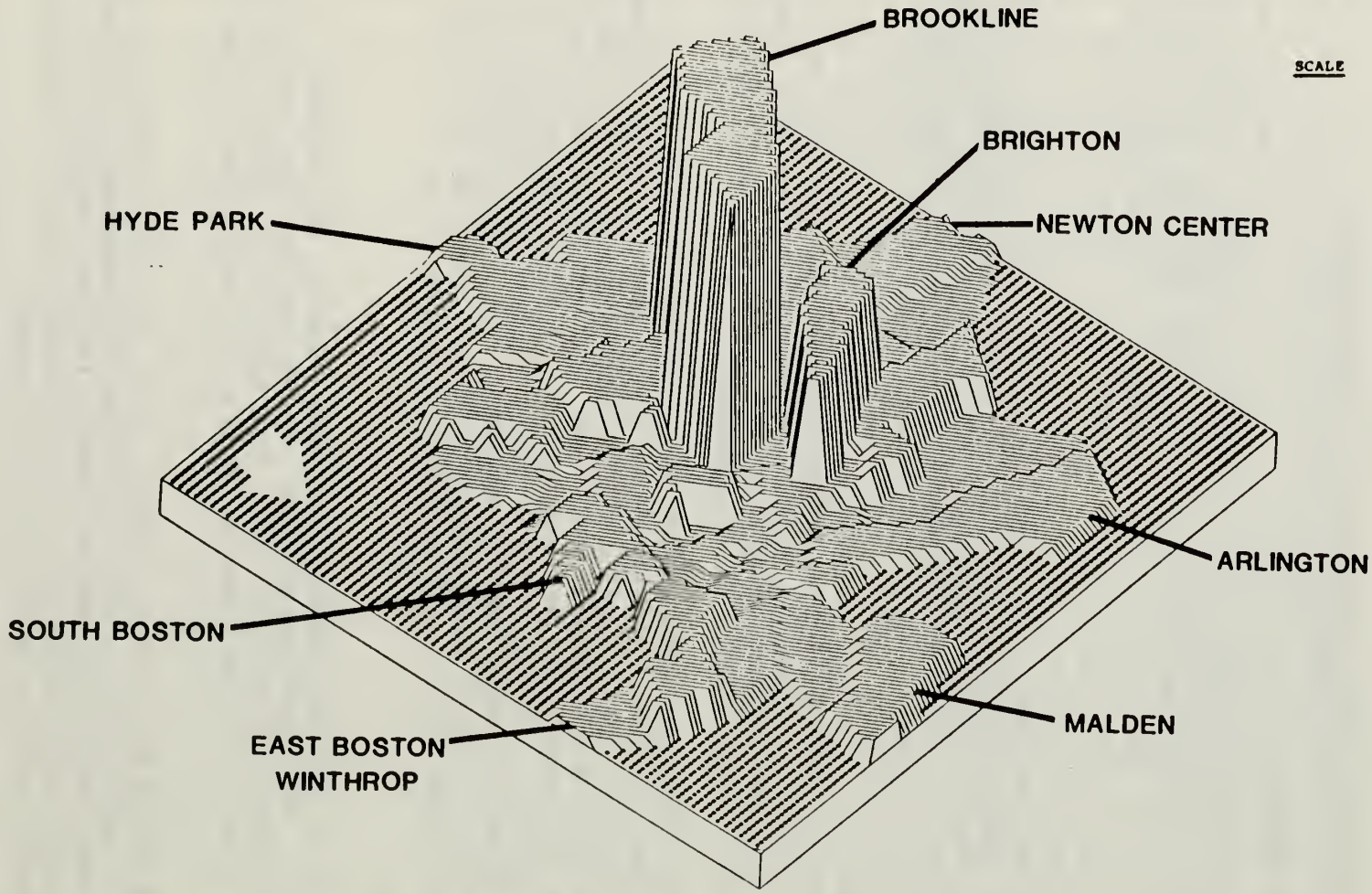
Figure 2-2 geographically displays the round trips made by the survey respondents in one week; these totals are presented by location of the respondents' homes. Partially due to a seemingly high response rate from Brookline and Brighton, residents of these two areas appear to be the heaviest users of THE RIDE, making roughly 24% and 12% of all round-trips, respectively. (Since there is no recent and reliable data with which to verify the representativeness of the survey sample, it can only be said that these specific response rates appear to be disproportionately high.) For the number of RIDE trips made, by the trip-maker's home community, see Table B-2 in Appendix B.

Average RIDE usage per respondent by locality, is shown in Figure 2-3. Back Bay and South Boston have the highest average number of round-trips per week (4.4). Although Brookline and Brighton have the highest total number of trips, the average number of round-trips per week made by respondents in these areas is not particularly high. Brookline's average is 2.5 and Brighton's is 2.3 round-trips per week per respondent. For a tabulation of the average number of trips made per person per week, by the trip-maker's home community, see Table B-3 in Appendix B.

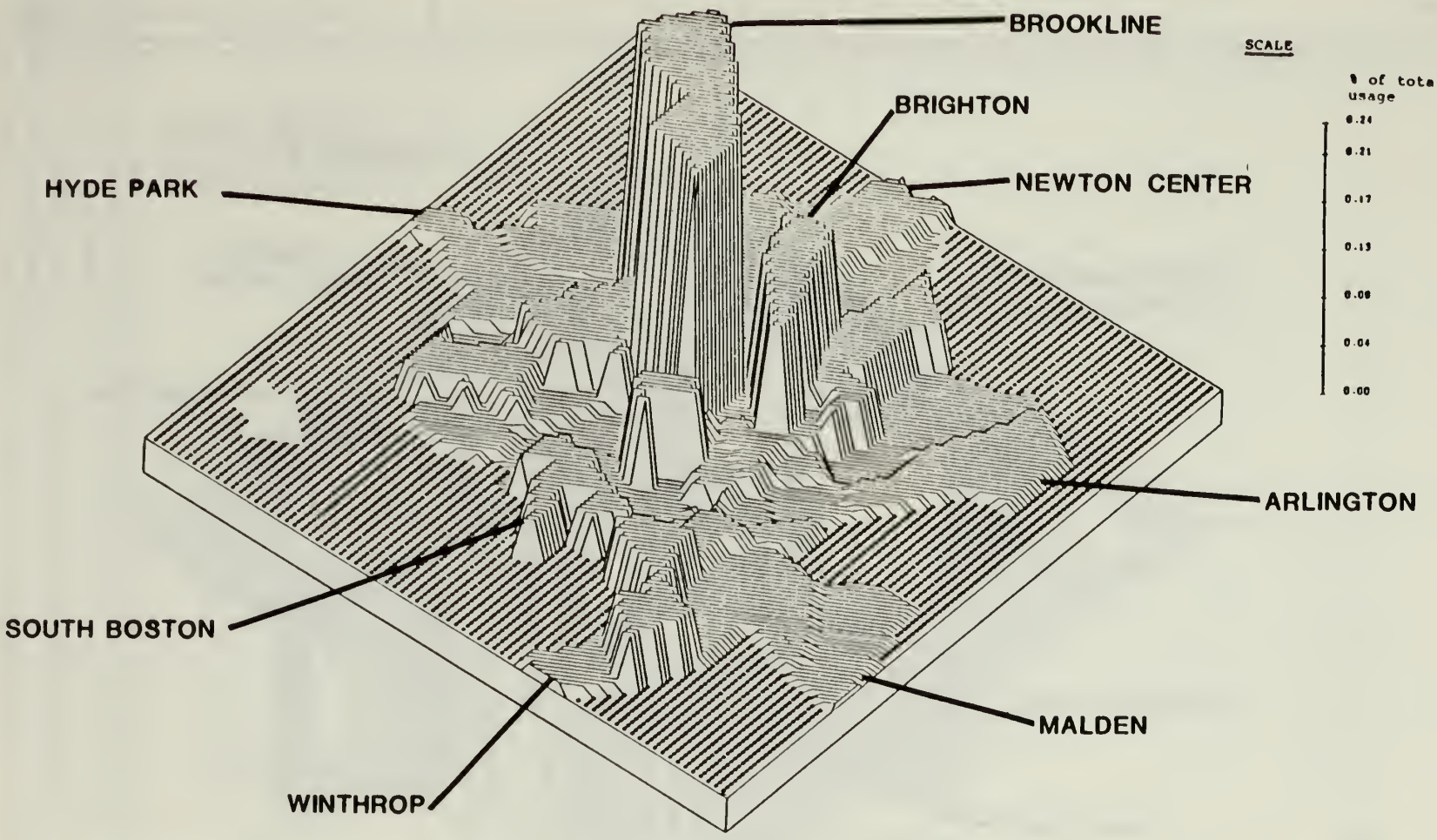
Age and Sex

The majority of survey respondents were elderly and female (Figure 2-4). Of users responding to the age and sex questions, 41% were 75 years of age or older, 59% were 65 or older, and 72% were 55 or older.[1] Of all people living in the Boston Standard

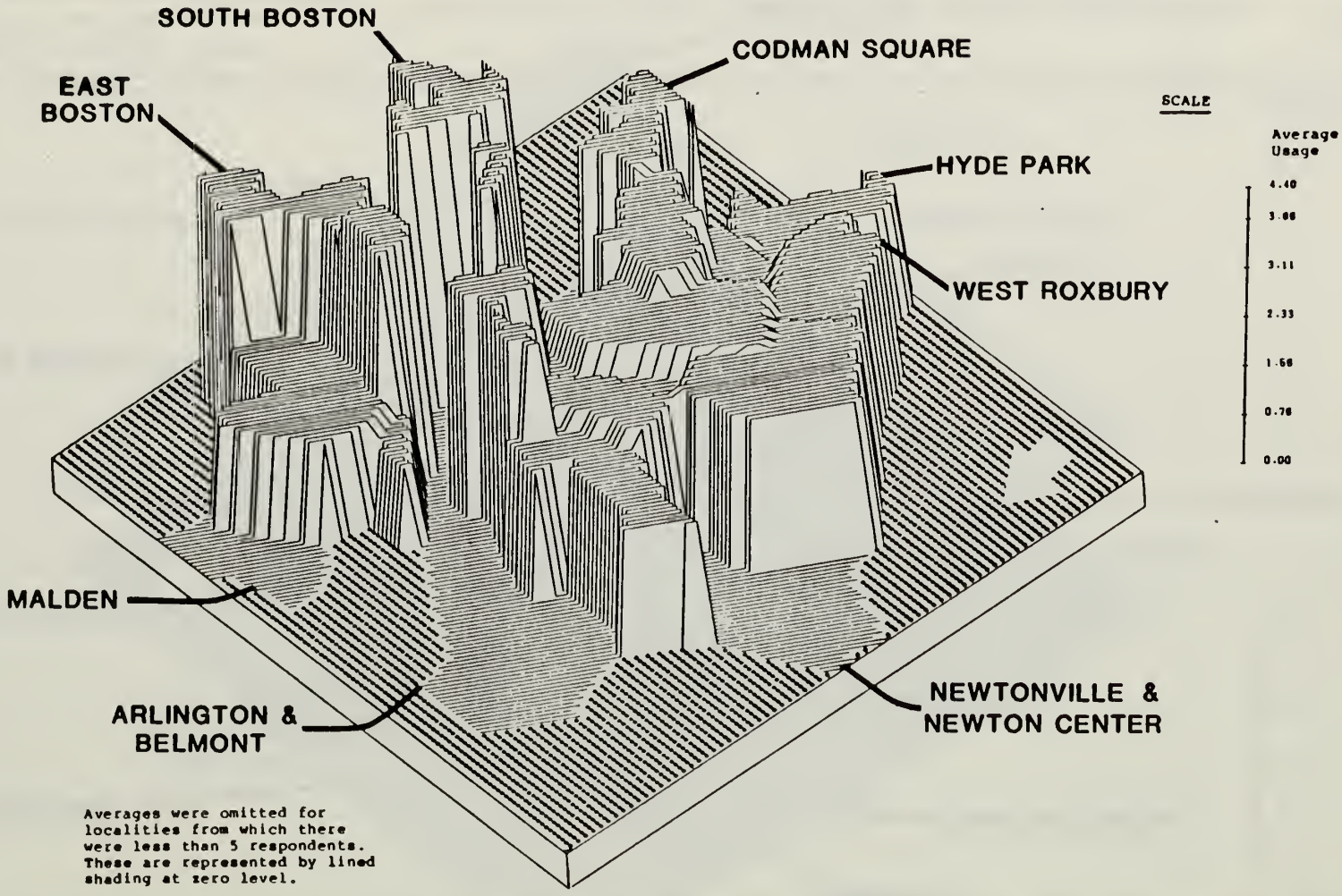
[1]Since this was a mail-back survey, it is not known how representative this sample is. Future analyses of passenger-trip data--assuming they include passenger-identification numbers--will permit a comparison between the socioeconomic profile presented in this survey and the profile of all users.



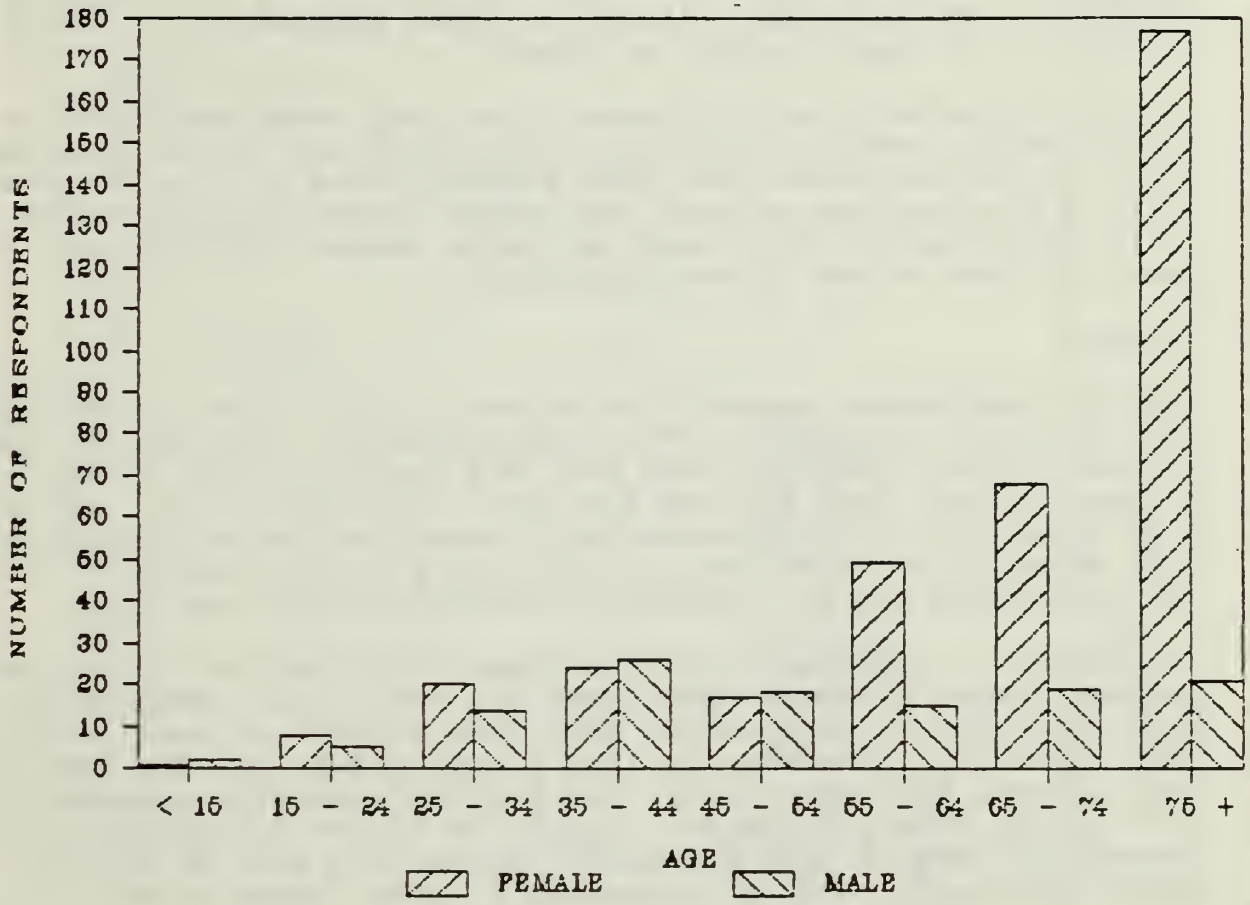
Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation Technical Report 53b January 1986	NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE Total Number of Respondents = 492	CTPS FIGURE 2-1



Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation Technical Report 53b January 1986	SUM OF ALL TRIPS TAKEN BY ALL SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY RESPONDENTS' PLACE OF RESIDENCE	CTPS FIGURE 2-2



Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	AVERAGE RIDE USAGE PER PERSON BY RESPONDENTS' PLACE OF RESIDENCE	CTPS
Technical Report 53b January 1986		FIGURE 2-3



	F	M	Total
< 15	1	2	3
15 - 24	8	5	13
25 - 34	20	14	34
35 - 44	24	26	50
45 - 54	17	18	35
55 - 64	49	15	64
65 - 74	68	19	87
75 +	177	21	198
			0
	364	120	484

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	AGE AND SEX OF RESPONDENTS	CTPS
Technical Report 53b January 1986	Total Number of Respondents = 484	FIGURE 2-4

Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), according to the 1980 census, 5% are 75 or older, 13% 65 or older, and 23% 55 or older. Females made up 75% of all survey respondents, males 25%. Females outnumbered males in most age categories. In fact, 61% of all survey respondents were females aged 55 years or more. Within the Boston SMSA, 53% of the total population is female, and only 13% female and 55 or older.

Of the respondents who indicated that they sometimes used the Distributor, roughly 17% were in the 25-45 age bracket, while only 11% of those who used only THE RIDE were in this bracket. This difference may reflect the higher percentage of members of this age group who work--and the large number of employment destinations served by the Distributor.

Income

Survey respondents appeared to belong to low-income households. Of those who responded to the income question, 40% had an income of less than $5,000 per year (in 1984 dollars), and 73% had an income of less than $10,000 per year (see Figure 2-5). Of all the households in the Boston SMSA, according to the 1980 census, 12% have an income of less than $5,000 per year (in 1979 dollars), and 26% an income of less than $10,000 per year.

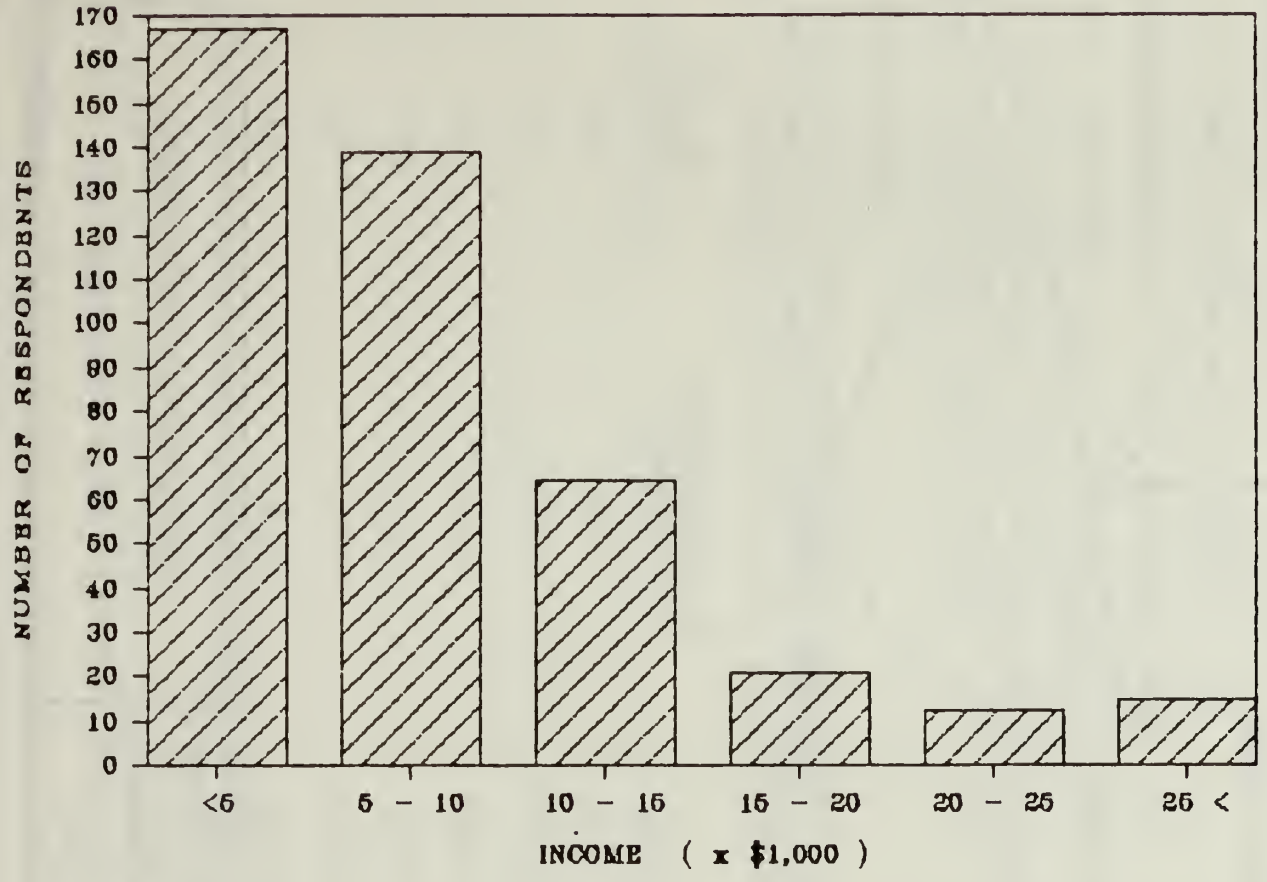
In general, respondents who sometimes used the Distributor were slightly more affluent than those who never did. Roughly 38% of the Distributor users earned less than $5,000 per year; 40% of the RIDE-only users were in this income group. Of the Distributor users, 82% earned less than $15,000 annually, compared to 89% of the RIDE-only users. Almost 8% of the Distributor users earned $25,000 or more per year; by contrast, only 4% of the RIDE-only users counted themselves in this income group.

Occupation

Most survey respondents indicated that they were not in the work force in May 1984. Of those responding to the occupation question, 45% were retired and 13% were unemployed (see Figure 2-6).

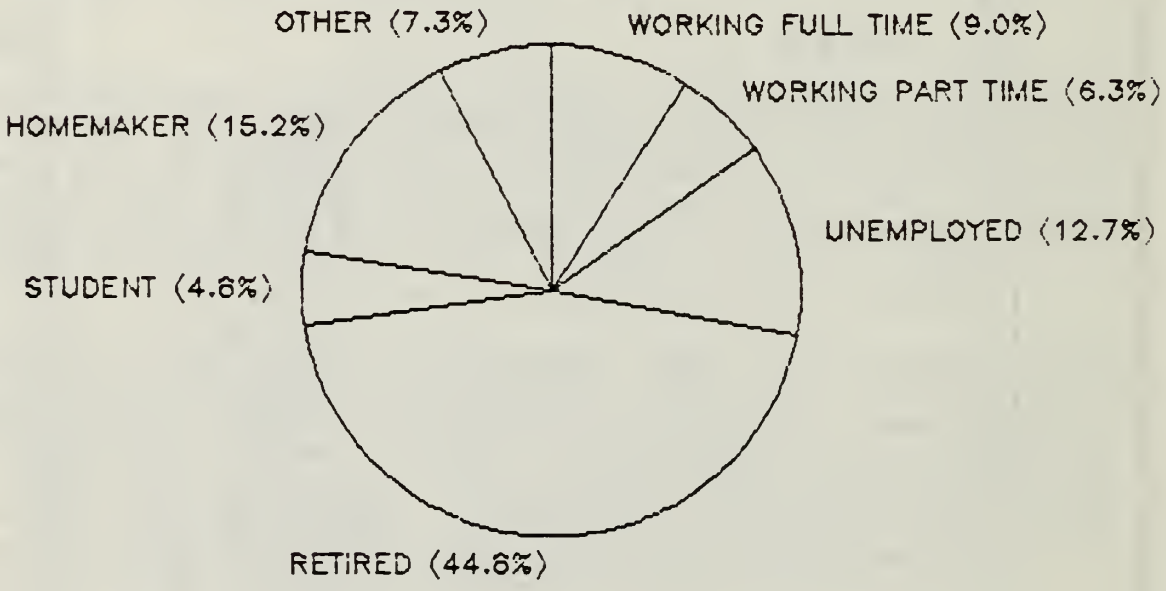
There is no exact counterpart to these data in the 1980 census. An approximate comparison can be made from the census' income and labor force statistics in the Boston SMSA. Of all households with an income, 27% received some form of Social Security income. It is likely that a large portion of these households receive a Social Security payment to a retired individual. The census data also indicate that 16% of persons aged 16 years or more, and in the active labor force, were unemployed at some time during 1979.

Nine percent of the respondents were employed full time in May 1984; another 6% were employed part time. The 1980 census found that, in the Boston SMSA, 73% of all persons aged 16 years or more and in the active labor force were employed 40 weeks or more in 1979.



INCOME	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
<5	167	40.0
5 - 10	139	33.3
10 - 15	64	15.3
15 - 20	21	5.0
20 - 25	12	2.9
25 <	15	3.6

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	INCOME OF RESPONDENTS	CTPS
Technical Report 53b January 1986	Total Number of Respondents = 418	FIGURE 2-5



Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	OCCUPATION OF RESPONDENTS	CTPS
Technical Report 53b January 1986	Total Number of Respondents = 480	FIGURE 2-6

Of the respondents who sometimes used the Distributor, 17.5% were employed full- or part-time; 15% of the RIDE-only users were employed.

Household Size

The survey data indicated that most users lived in one-person households. Of those responding to the household-size question, 60% indicated that they lived alone. The 1980 Census indicates that within the Boston SMSA, only 26% of all households are 1-person households. The data on the distribution of respondents' households by size are presented in Figure 2-7.

Auto Availability and Ability to Drive

Users were asked how frequently they had an auto available to them as an alternative to THE RIDE. Of a total of 445 respondents:

54% "never had a car available,"

24% "infrequently had a car available," and

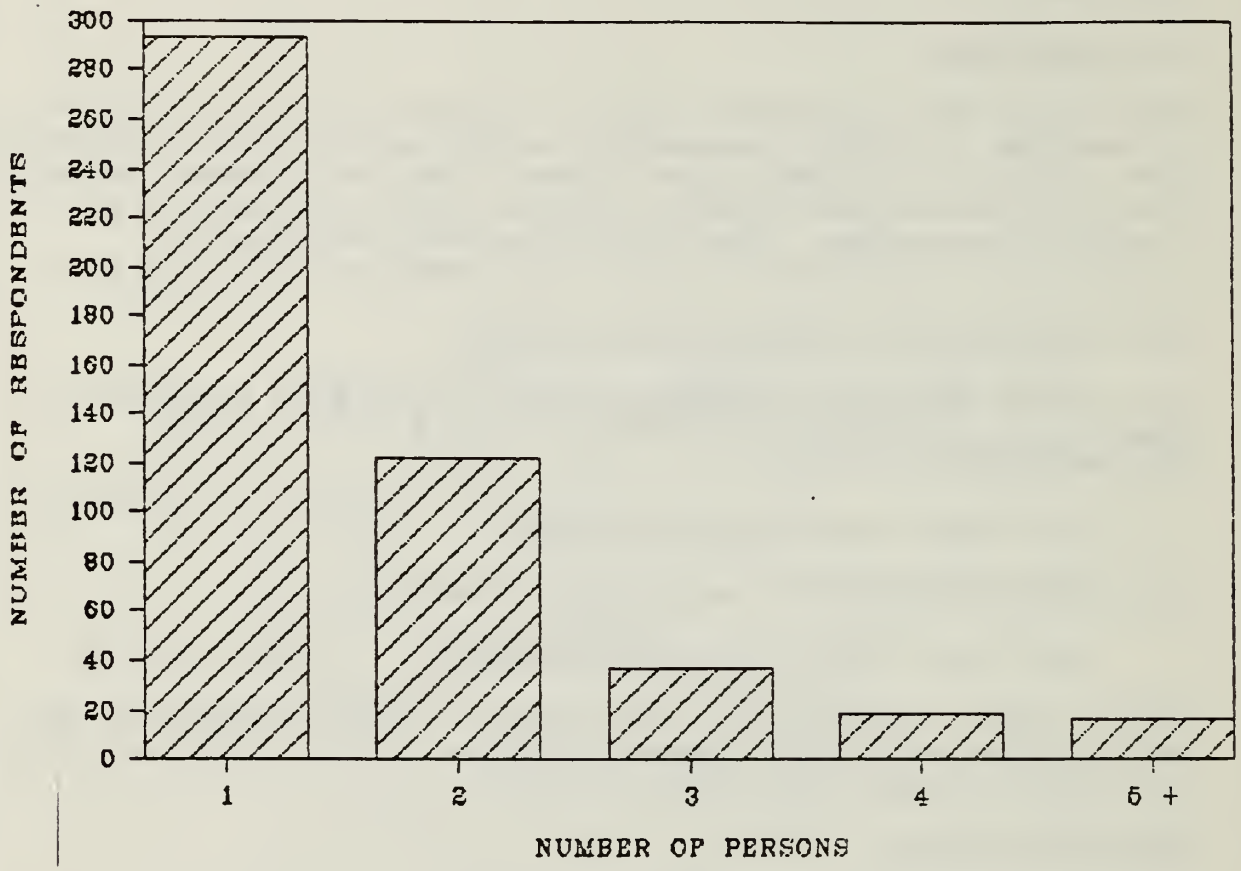
14% "sometimes had a car available."

Of the users responding to the ability-to-drive question, 78% were neither able nor licensed to drive, and only 9% were both licensed and physically able to drive.

Mobility Devices

Of a total of 448 users responding to this question, 314 (70%) were dependent on a mobility device. The devices used and the number of respondents who use them are listed below.

No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Device
175	44.6	Cane
67	17.1	Manual wheelchair
52	13.3	Electric wheelchair
33	8.4	Walker
28	7.1	Braces
18	4.6	Assistant
1	0.3	Dog guide
18	4.6	Other



No. of persons		Percent
1	294	60.4
2	122	25.1
3	37	7.6
4	18	3.7
5 +	16	3.3
Total	487	

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	SIZE OF RESPONDENTS' HOUSEHOLD	CTPS
Technical Report 53b January 1986	Total Number of Respondents = 487	FIGURE 2-7

These data indicate that 30% of all respondents use a wheelchair and would require the lift device. This 30% can be considered to be a lower limit, since some non-wheelchair users also make regular use of the lift.

On average, wheelchair respondents claimed to make 3.5 round-trips (or 7 one-way trips) per week on THE RIDE, and non-wheelchair respondents claimed to make 2.6 round-trips (or 5.2 one-way trips). This finding stands to reason, since wheelchair users are generally more constrained in their mobility options than are non-wheelchair users.

These data also indicate that wheelchair users in Boston have a level of mobility which is above the national norm. The National Survey of Transportation Handicapped People (1979)[1] indicates that wheelchair users made a total of 5.0 one-way trips per week (all modes), and that disabled individuals using mechanical devices made 5.8. The 1984 Boston survey asked about trip-making on MBTA services only, not about total trip-making. If data on all trips were available, they would presumably show an average level of mobility even further above the national norm.

Of the respondents who sometimes rode the Distributor, nearly 38% were wheelchair users. This figure is roughly 8% higher than that for RIDE-only users.

2.2 USERS' ASSESSMENT OF THE RIDE AND DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR

RIDE Characteristics

For each of the following characteristics, the users were asked to assign a grade from 5 to 1 (5 indicating very good, and 1 very bad).

Characteristic	Avg. Grade	No. of Respondents
Ability to get through to the reservation clerk	3.9	419
Ability to get trips that are requested	4.0	410
Reliability of confirmation system	4.3	403
Ability to speak to dispatcher	3.9	369
Mechanical reliability of lift	4.3	222
Reliability when setting lock on lift	4.5	245
Mechanical reliability of the vehicle	4.4	321
Vehicle cleanliness	4.3	402
Service reliability	4.2	372
General driver courtesy	4.6	410

All the RIDE characteristics specified were rated highly.

[1] Urban Mass Transportation Administration, Technical Report of the National Survey of Transportation Handicapped People, Washington D.C., October 1978.

An analysis was performed to determine whether there were significant differences in scoring between wheelchair users and non-chair users. The results are presented below:[1]

Characteristic	Average Grade: Wheelchair Users	Average Grade: Non-Chair Users
Ability to get through to the reservation clerk	3.6	3.9
Ability to get trips that are requested	3.7	4.0
Reliability of confirmation system	4.1	4.3
Ability to speak to dispatcher	3.6	3.9
Mechanical reliability of lift	4.1	4.3
Reliability when setting lock on lift	4.1	4.5
Mechanical reliability of the vehicle	4.1	4.4
Vehicle cleanliness	4.1	4.3
Service reliability	4.1	4.3
General driver courtesy	4.3	4.6

In general, wheelchair users were somewhat less satisfied with RIDE service than other users, but the differences were relatively small. No individual difference exceeded one-half of a point.

A third set of scores was calculated to determine the assessment of these ten performance characteristics by those respondents who sometimes used the Downtown Distributor. There was no significant difference between the general scoring and that of Distributor users.

Preliminary analyses were performed to assess whether service availability and reliability differed between the "new" and "old" service areas. For a brief discussion on this point, see Appendix C.

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[1]These differences were found to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Punctuality of THE RIDE

The users were asked to state the number of occasions in their last ten trips that THE RIDE arrived early, on time, and late, to pick them up. Respondents used their own judgment in making this assessment. For the occasions that THE RIDE arrived early or late, the users were asked to estimate an average for the number of minutes it was early and an average for the number of minutes it was late.

For the 4,070 RIDE trips assessed,

65% of the pick-ups were "on time,"
15% were "early," and
20% were "late."

For the RIDE trips that were early, the distribution of the number of minutes early is given in Figure 2-8. The same distribution for late arrivals is given in Figure 2-9.

Of the users who judged that THE RIDE sometimes arrived early, only 28% indicated that it arrived more than 15 minutes before the scheduled time, on average. Of those who reported late RIDE arrivals, only 33% indicated that it arrived more than 15 minutes after the scheduled time, on average. The survey responses indicated, overall, that in the majority of cases, RIDE pick-ups were made within 15 minutes of their scheduled time.

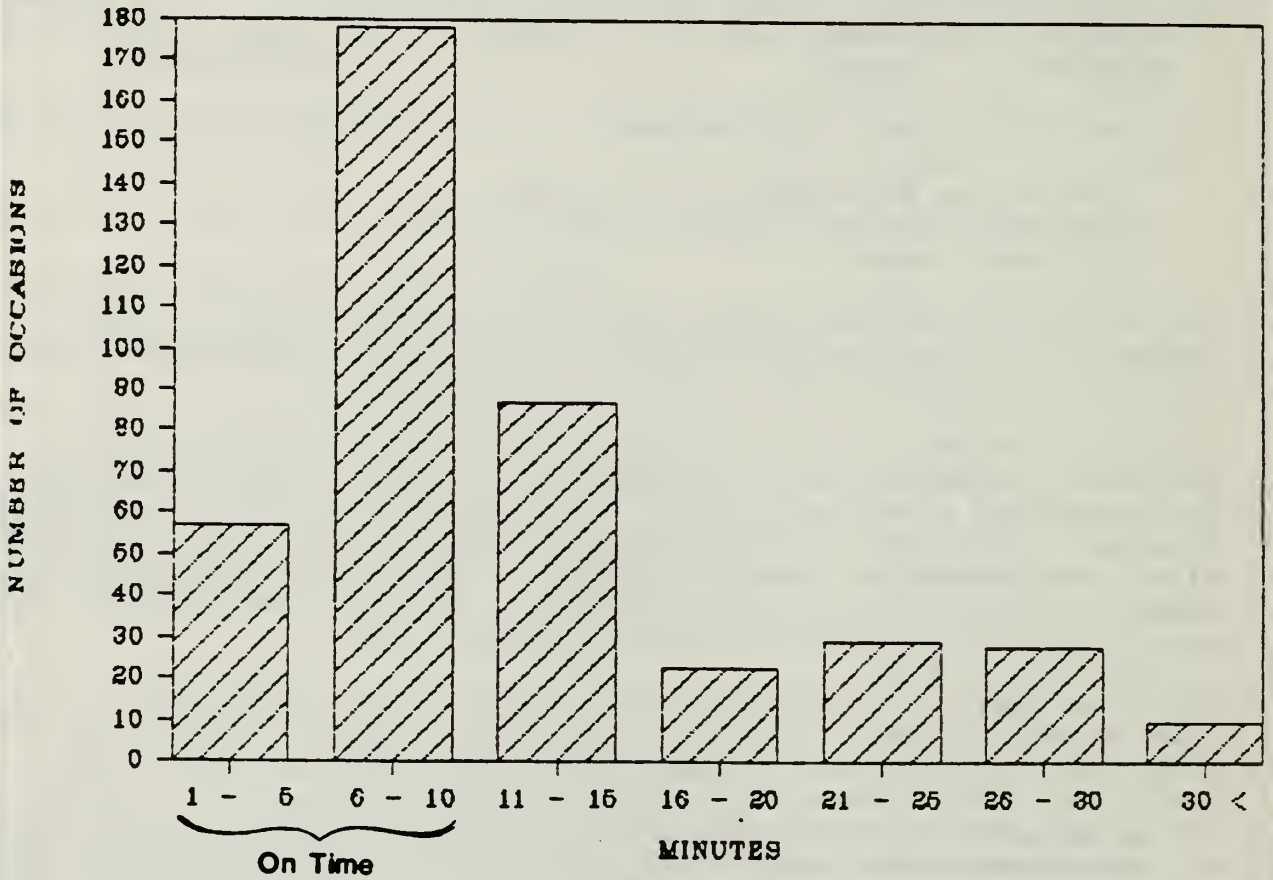
Empirical data on punctuality are available for comparison. In CTPS Technical Report 53a--the companion piece to this study--trip start times were analyzed using empirical data from 1981, 1982, and 1983. These data indicated that between 55% and 60% of all passenger-trips started exactly on time. The MBTA considers all passenger-trips begun within ten minutes, plus or minus, of the scheduled pick-up time to be on time. By this criterion, 85% of all completed passenger-trips were provided on time, 8% were early, and 7% were late.

The punctuality assessment was also calculated separately for respondents from the "new" and for those from the "old" service areas (see Figure 2-10). No significant differences in punctuality are apparent between the "new" and "old" service areas.

Number of RIDE Trips Denied

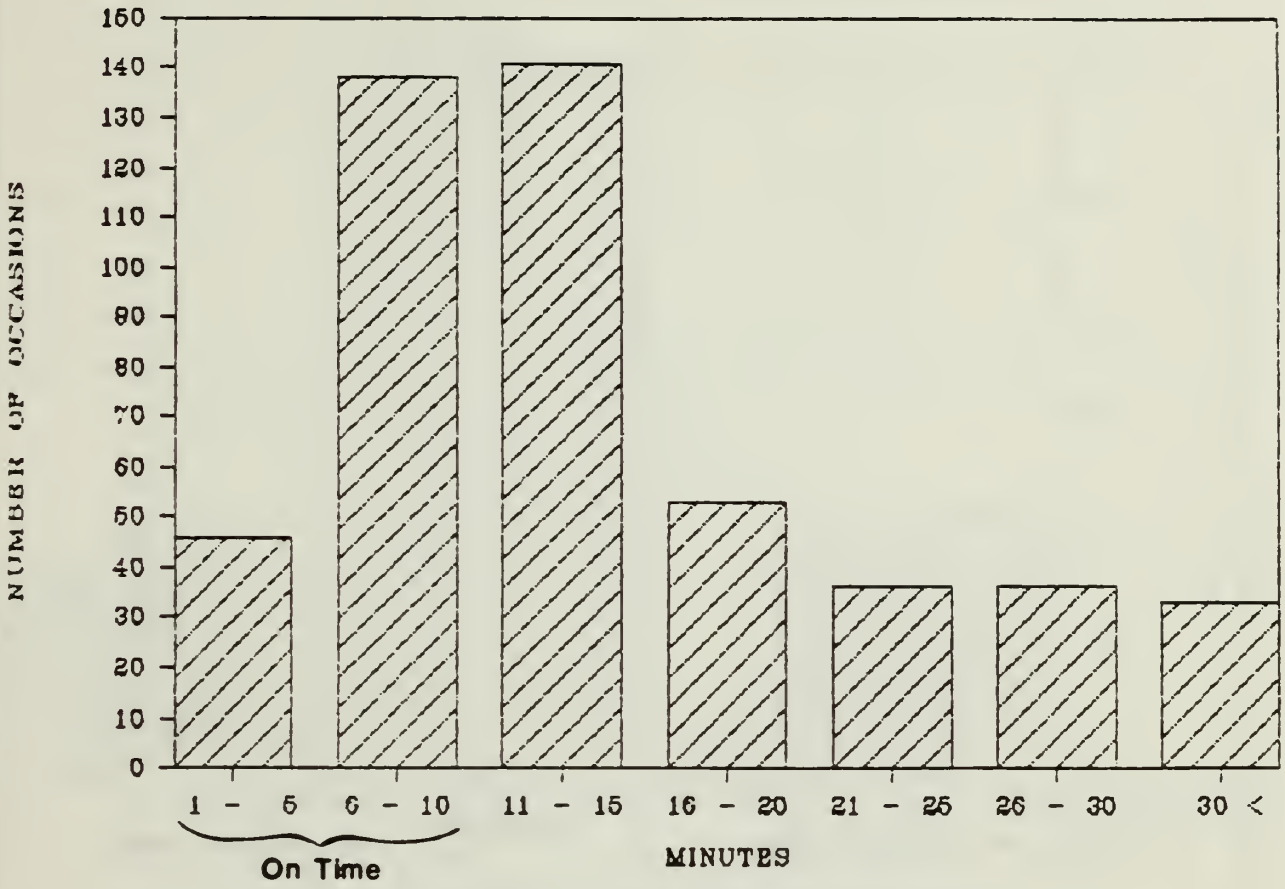
Most RIDE users are denied very few of their requests for service. Of a total of 371 respondents, 82% claimed that they were denied between 0 and 1 RIDE trips per week, 14% between 1 and 2 trips per week, and only 4% between 3 and 4 trips per week.

Under the present RIDE system, wheelchair users are supposed to receive informal priority when trips are allocated. However, from the data presented in Figure 2-11, respondents in wheel-



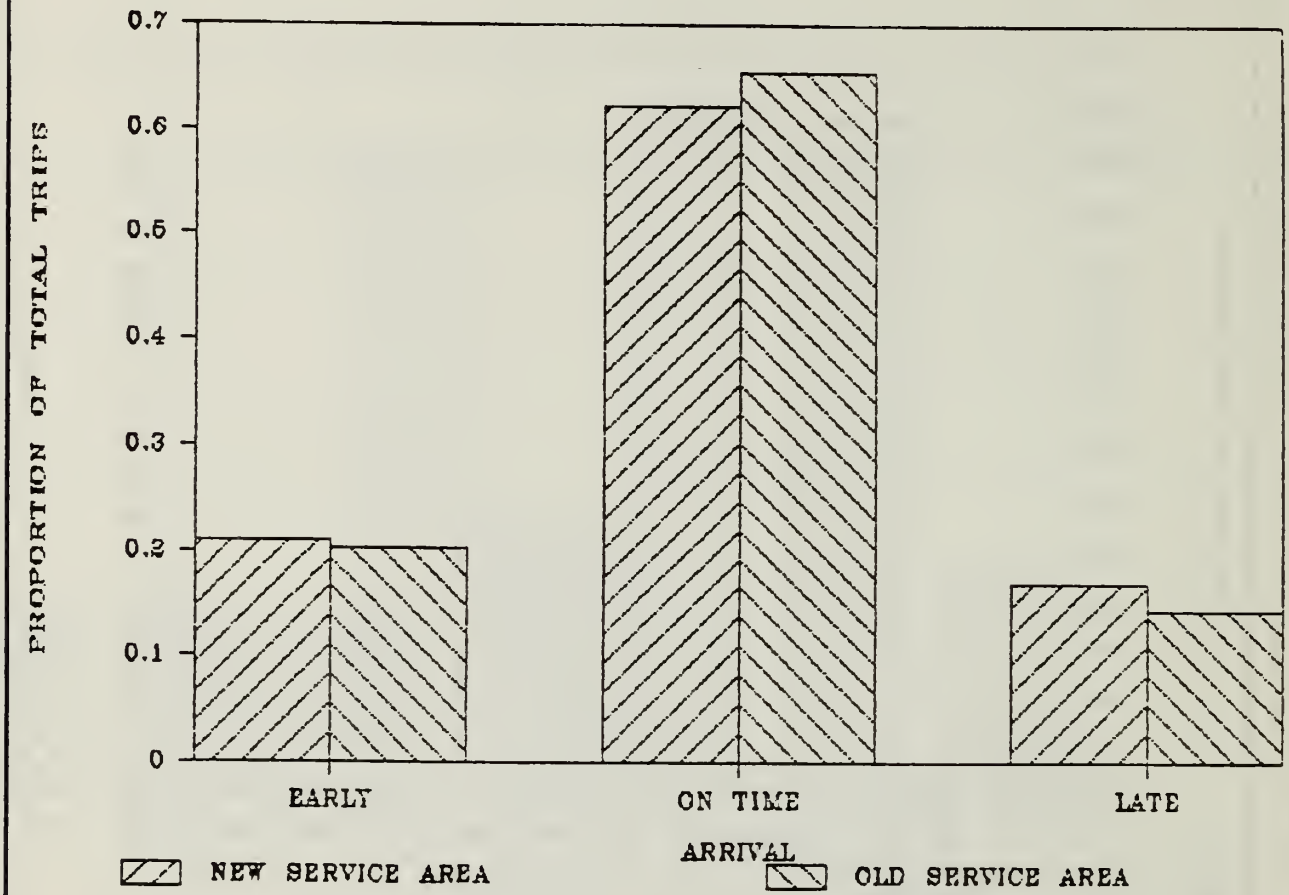
MIN. EARLY	FREQ	PERCENTAGE
1 - 5	57	13.8
6 - 10	178	43.2
11 - 15	87	21.1
16 - 20	23	5.6
21 - 25	29	7.0
26 - 30	28	6.8
30 <	10	2.4
Total	412	

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	EARLY RIDE ARRIVALS	CTPS
Technical Report 53b January 1986		FIGURE 2-8



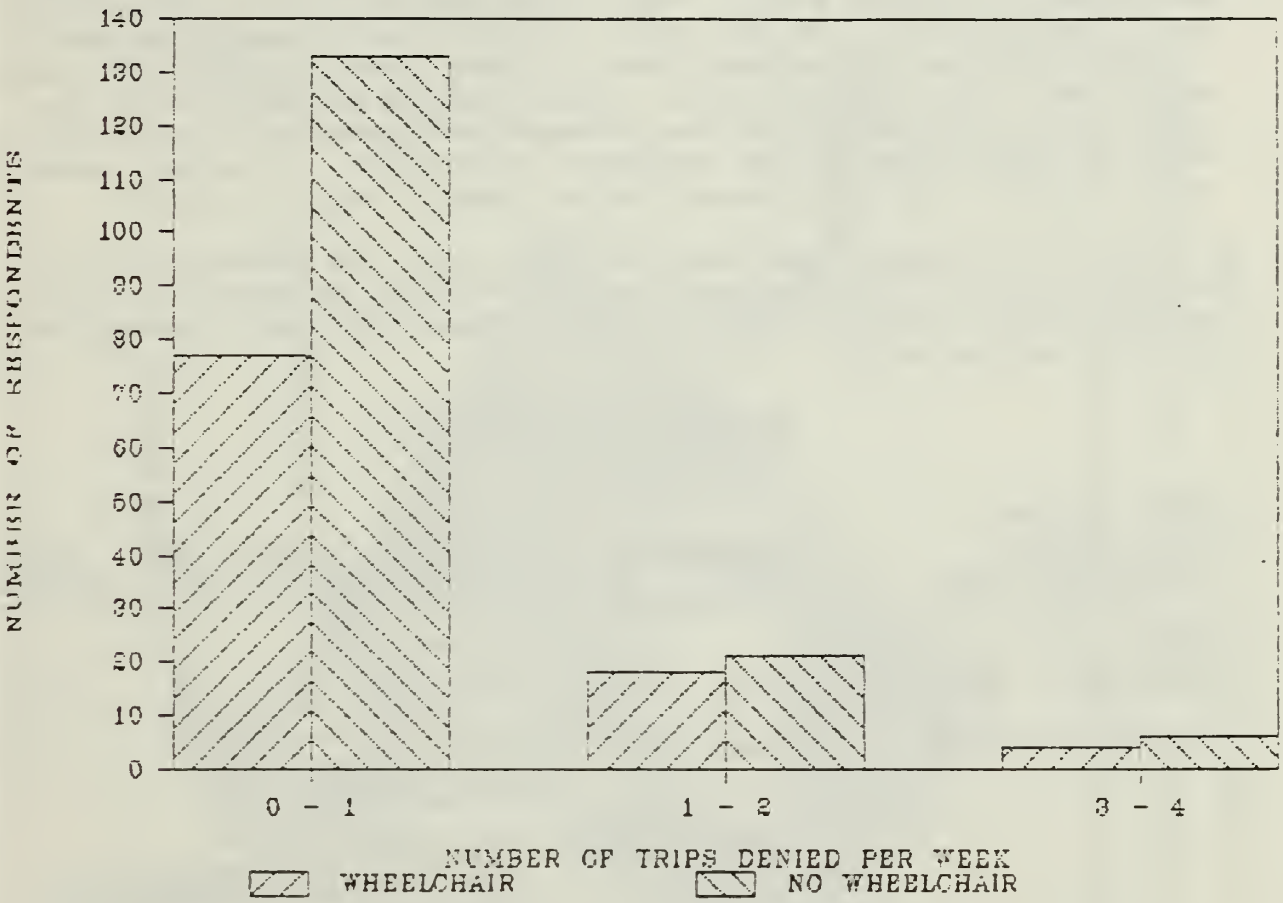
MIN. EARLY	FREQ	PERCENTAGE
1 - 5	46	9.5
6 - 10	138	28.6
11 - 15	141	29.2
16 - 20	53	11.0
21 - 25	36	7.5
26 - 30	36	7.5
30 <	33	6.8
Total	483	

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	LATE RIDE ARRIVALS	CTPS
Technical Report 53b January 1986		FIGURE 2-9



	NEW	OLD
EARLY	0.21	0.20
ON TIME	0.62	0.65
LATE	0.17	0.14

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	PUNCTUALITY OF THE RIDE BY NEW AND OLD SERVICE AREAS	CTPS FIGURE 2-10
Technical Report 53b January 1986		



TRIPS DENIED	WHEELCHAIR	%	NO WHLCHAI	%	ALL
0 - 1	77	77.8	133	83.1	210
1 - 2	18	18.2	21	13.1	39
3 - 4	4	4.0	6	3.8	10
Total	99	100.0	160	100.0	259

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	NUMBER OF TRIPS DENIED PER WEEK CLASSIFIED BY USE OF WHEELCHAIR	CTPS
Technical Report 53b January 1986		FIGURE 2-11

chairs appear to have been provided (and denied) service in roughly the same proportion as non-wheelchair respondents.

The average number of trips denied by respondent's home community is mapped in Figure 2-12. For a tabulation of this, see Table B-4 in Appendix B. Of the three communities whose respondents claimed to have the highest denial rates, two (Malden and Jamaica Plain) are new service areas. This finding suggests that the number of trips denied to respondents was greater in the "new" service areas than in the original core areas. However, some of the averages were calculated using a small sample size.

A second and larger data set on this topic was examined in an analysis of all trip requests by user's home address for one complete week during February 1984. These data are summarized in the two tables below.

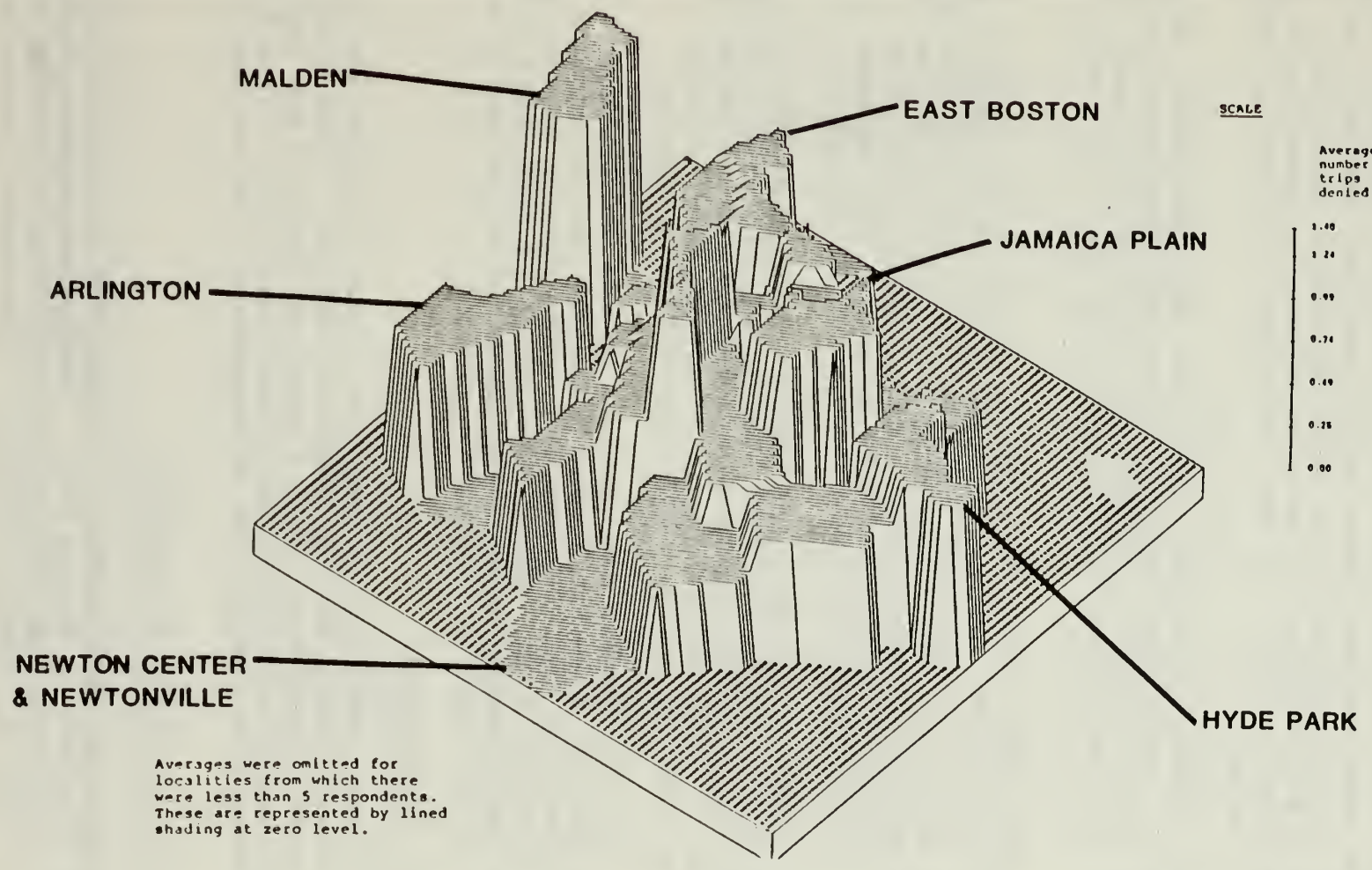
One-way Trip Requests

Home Address of Person Requesting Trip	Scheduled No.	Scheduled %	Not Available No.	Not Available %	Cancelled No.	Cancelled %	Total Requests
Boston (Core Area), Brookline, Cambridge	87	82.9	16	15.2	2	1.9	105
All other areas	17	68.0	7	28.0	1	4.0	25

Two-way Trip Requests

Home Address of Person Requesting Trip	1-Way Trip Sched. No.	1-Way Trip Sched. %	2-Way Trip Sched. No.	2-Way Trip Sched. %	2-Way Trip Not Avail. No.	2-Way Trip Not Avail. %	Cancelled No.	Cancelled %	Total Requests
Boston (Core Area), Brookline, Cambridge	54	9.6	424	75.7	63	11.3	19	3.4	560
All other areas	21	10.6	140	70.7	34	17.2	3	1.5	198

These data indicate that the trip-denial rate in the "new" service areas was 13% higher than in the "old" service area for one-way trips; for two-way trips, it was 6% higher. This finding, based on empirical analysis, corroborates users' subjective belief that access to service was better for those living in the "core" areas.



Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	AVERAGE NUMBER OF ROUND TRIPS DENIED PER RESPONDENT PER WEEK BY RESPONDENTS' PLACE OF RESIDENCE	CTPS
Technical Report 53b January 1986		FIGURE 2-12

A plausible reason for this higher trip-denial rate in the "new" service areas is that, during the service-start-up period, the number of trip requests from these "new" areas appears to have been low. A low initial demand rate across the relatively large geographic area would have created a relatively low demand density. Given that, historically, service demand throughout the RIDE service area has been above supply and that new additions of rolling stock have not coincided with geographic expansion, attempting to serve demand in low-demand-density areas could have been accomplished only at the cost of reduced response in more dense demand areas.

Had the MBTA chosen to respond to the new, but less dense, service demand, it would have incurred lower vehicle productivity. To the degree that vehicle productivity corresponds to service efficiency, this would have implied a choice for a less efficient service.

Thus, the MBTA found itself in something of a double bind as it expanded RIDE service. It could accept a higher than usual "not available" rate in the new service areas, or could dedicate more, but less productive, vehicle-hours of service to the new service areas. Assuming that demand continues to outpace available resources, whichever choice the MBTA makes, it will be made at some cost to either existing users or potential new users.

The policy choice of the MBTA has been to provide service to new areas, and to relax the trip "not available" rate criterion in these areas. This choice provides new travel possibilities to some new users, while maintaining a relatively high vehicle-productivity rate and, thus, relatively efficient service.

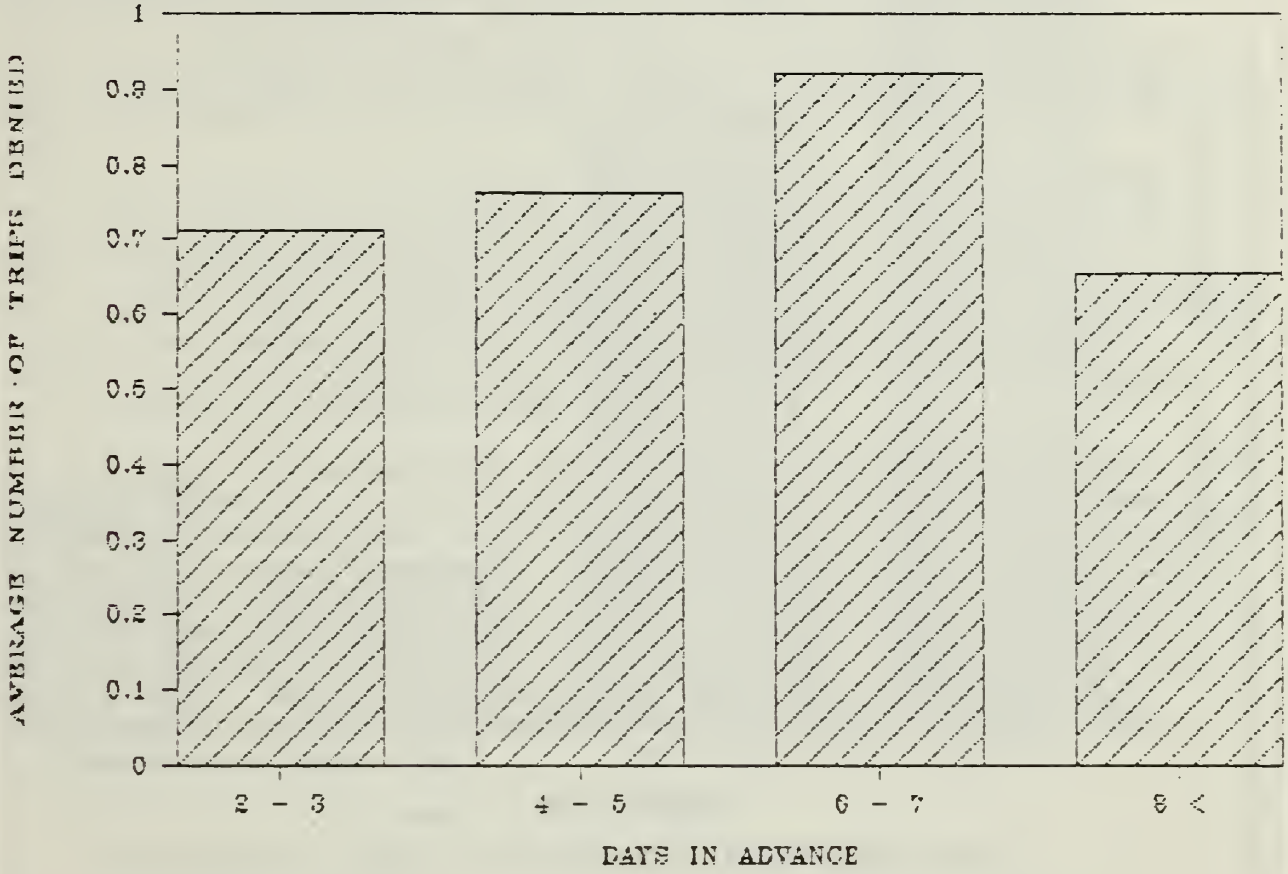
The number of trips denied was examined to see whether the trip-acceptance rate was affected by the number of days in advance of travel a request for THE RIDE was made. The results of this are presented in Figure 2-13. These data indicated that there was no apparent relationship between the number of trips denied and the length of the advance-reservation period.

The Downtown Distributor

Respondents were instructed to skip the series of questions about the Distributor if they did not use this service. Three hundred and sixty-seven respondents, from a total of 496, did not reply to the questions concerning the Downtown Distributor. From this it was inferred that roughly 75% of respondents did not use this service.

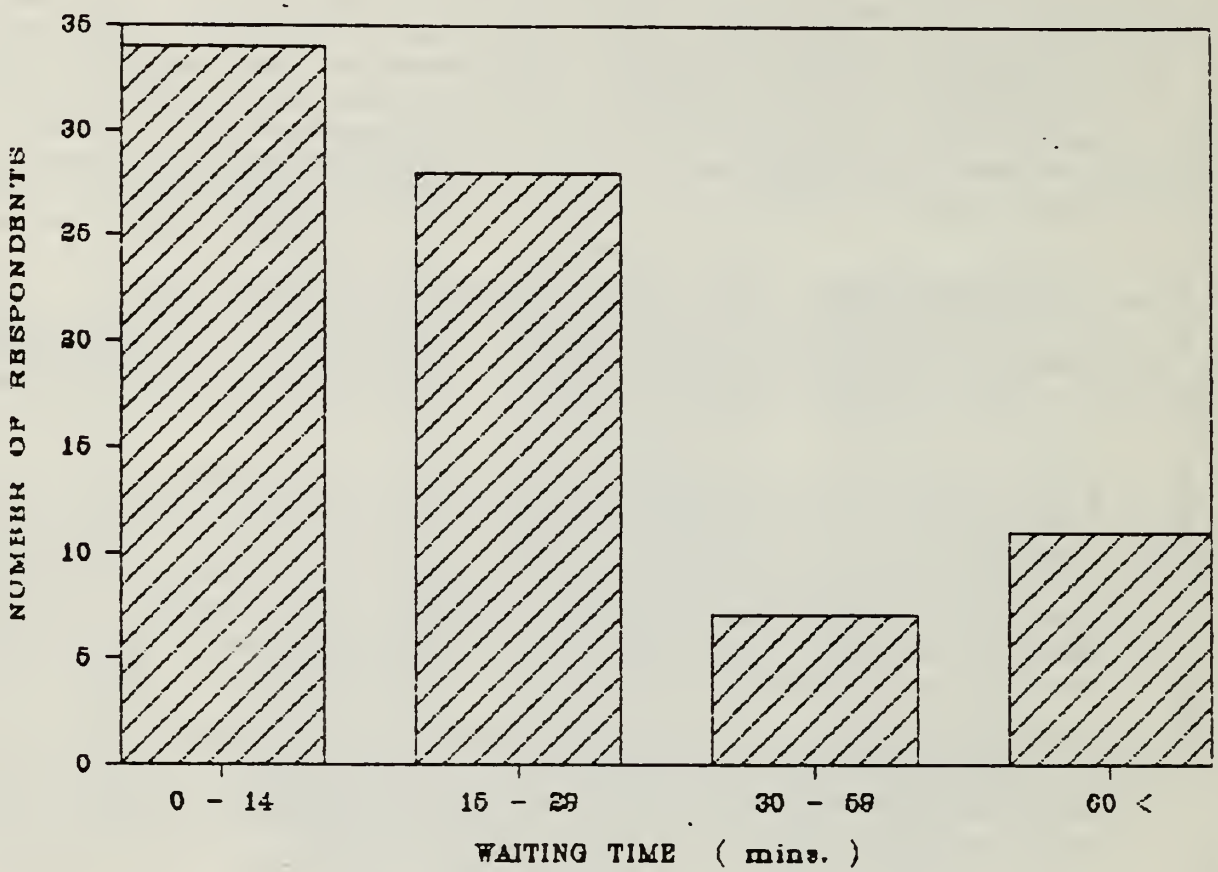
Reliability of Downtown Distributor

The distribution of respondents' waiting times for the Downtown Distributor is shown in Figure 2-14. Twenty-two percent of the respondents said that they had to wait more than 30 minutes to



2 - 3	0.71
4 - 5	0.76
6 - 7	0.92
8 <	0.65

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	AVERAGE NUMBER OF TRIPS DENIED BY NUMBER OF DAYS IN ADVANCE REQUESTS ARE MADE	CTPS
Technical Report 53b January 1986		FIGURE 2-13



MINS LATE	FREQ	%
0 - 14	34	42.5
15 - 29	28	35.0
30 - 59	7	8.8
60 <	11	13.8
	80	

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	RELIABILITY OF DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR	CTPS
Technical Report 53b January 1986	Total Number of Respondents = 80	FIGURE 2-14

catch the Distributor. The average waiting time for the Downtown Distributor was 15 minutes.

In the questionnaire, Distributor users were asked whether or not they phoned in advance of travel to reserve the service. Of a total of 99 respondents, 90 claimed that they did phone in advance. While the Distributor was to have functioned as any other fixed-route bus service, roughly 90% of Distributor patrons used this service as an advance-reservation system, like THE RIDE.

Evidence discussed in chapter 5 of CTPS Technical Report 53a indicated that some Distributor vehicles did not continue on their fixed route during significant periods of time, usually in the mid-afternoon. These lapses in service may have contributed to patrons' using the Distributor as an advance-reservation system, since they meant that patrons might not be guaranteed a trip without an advance reservation.

It has been suggested that one reason that Distributor users made advance phone reservations was that they were accustomed to calling in advance for service and continued this habit although it was no longer necessary. Another reason may have been that, because most users had low incomes and usually did not have a vehicle available for their travel, they may have wanted to avoid being stranded in the downtown area and the expense of having to hire a taxi. Since users were not asked why they reserved Distributor service, the reasons for this practice are a matter of interpretation.

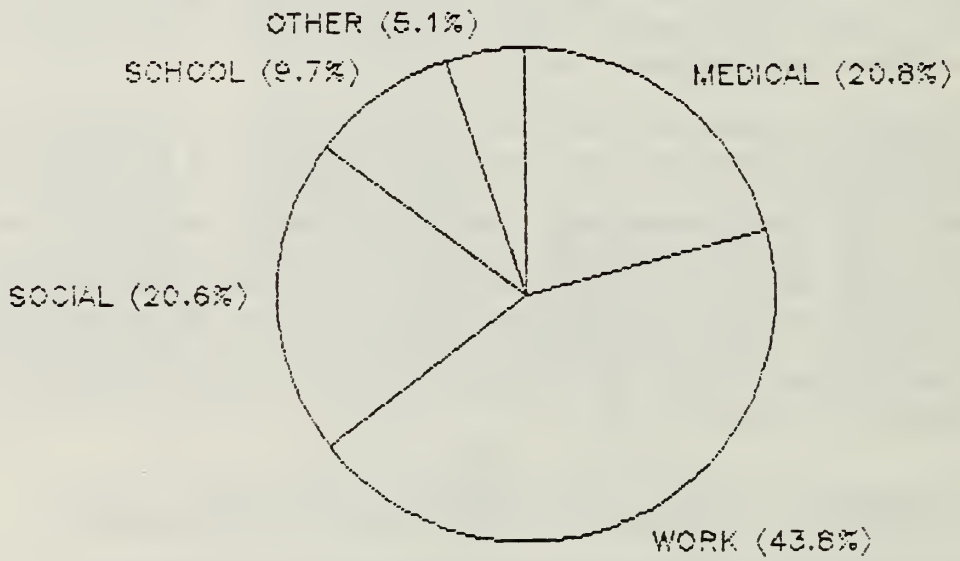
2.3 PATTERNS OF RIDE AND DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR USAGE

RIDE and Downtown Distributor Usage by Trip Purpose

The data presented in Figure 2-15 were collected by RIDE schedulers in September of 1981, 1982 and 1983. Although only 15.3% of all respondents were working either full or part time (according to the user survey), 43.8% of RIDE trips were for work purposes (see CTPS Technical Report 53a, section 3.3). It is safe to infer that this high percentage of work-related trips was due to respondents who were employed and regularly used THE RIDE and Distributor to travel to and from work. Such respondents were slightly more likely to be users who sometimes rode the Distributor, 17.5% of whom were employed, as compared to 15% of RIDE-only users. Given the limited income and mobility resources of most users, it would also be safe to infer that the MBTA's services are critical to employed users' ability to maintain employment.

RIDE Usage by Subscription and Non-subscription Users

Users were asked whether they were subscription users. There



Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation Technical Report 53b January 1986	PURPOSE OF RIDE TRIPS (Averaged over September 1981, 1982, 1983)	CTPS FIGURE 2-15

were 293 responses to this question. A plot of the number of subscription and non-subscription users in the survey, as well as the number of round-trips each group made on THE RIDE and the Distributor, is presented in Figure 2-16.

These data indicate that 59% of users were subscription users. However, to qualify as a subscription user, a patron must make at least 3 round-trips per week on THE RIDE, and half of those claiming to be subscription users also claimed to make less than 3 round-trips per week. Therefore, the validity of these specific statistics is suspect. It is likely that respondents confused "subscription" user with "registered" user.

Usage of the Downtown Distributor by Time of Day

The distribution of Distributor trips by time of day is presented in Figure 2-17. Peak hours of operation, based on examination of the passenger logs, amount to 5 hours (or 45%) of the Distributor's 11 hours of daily use. The user-survey results, however, show only 35% of all Distributor trips being executed during the peak hours. Distributor users apparently underestimated their peak-period use of the service. The service-characteristics portion of this study (see CTPS Technical Report 53a) indicated that roughly 75% of Distributor trips were scheduled for the peak periods in the 1982 sample data, and almost 70% in the 1983 sample data.

Changes in Downtown Travel Since the Introduction of the Downtown Distributor

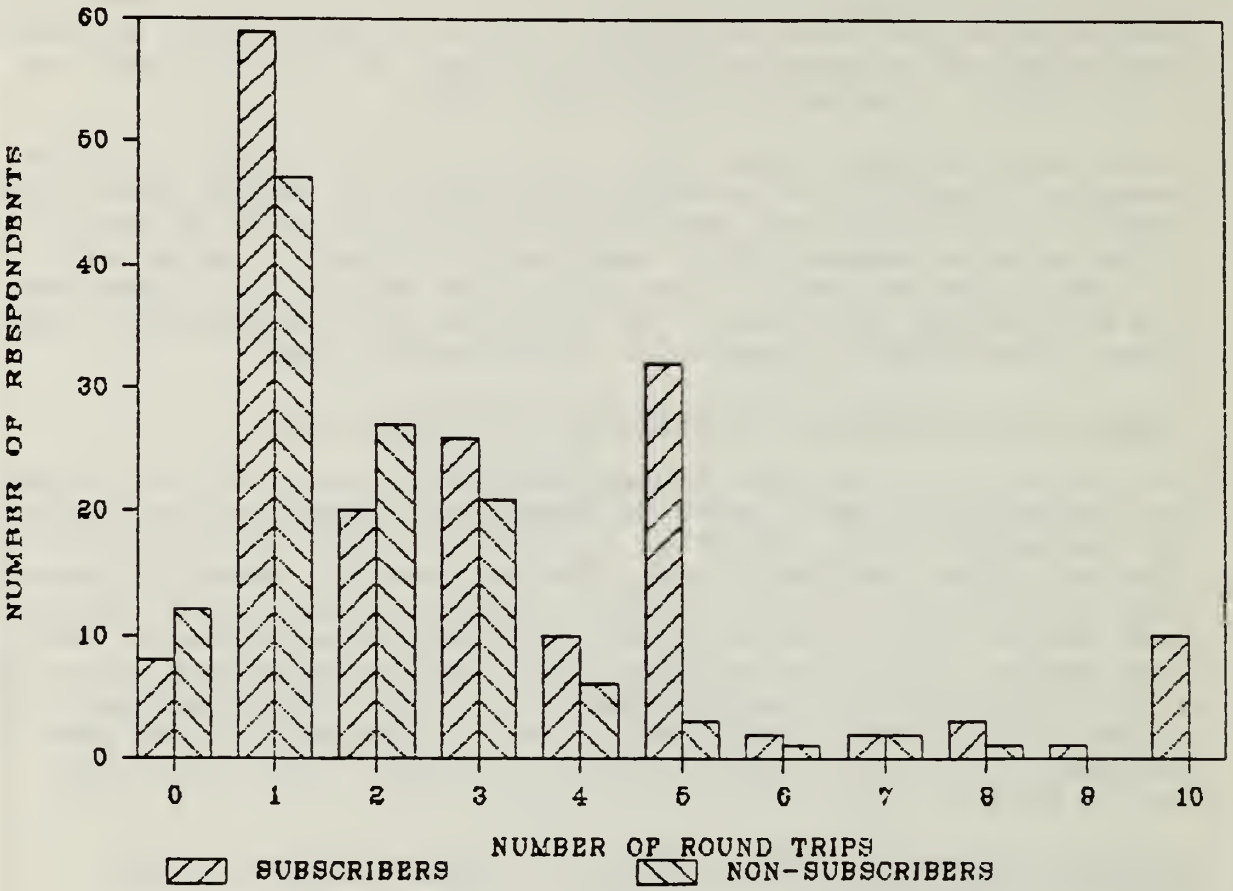
Users were asked to specify:

(a) Whether they traveled to the downtown more, less, or with the same frequency as they used to as a result of the "old" Distributor - which operated during all daytime, weekday hours - replacing THE RIDE service; and

(b) Whether they traveled to the downtown more, less, or with the same frequency as they used to as a result of the "new" Distributor - which operated during the AM and PM peak periods only - replacing the "old" Distributor service.

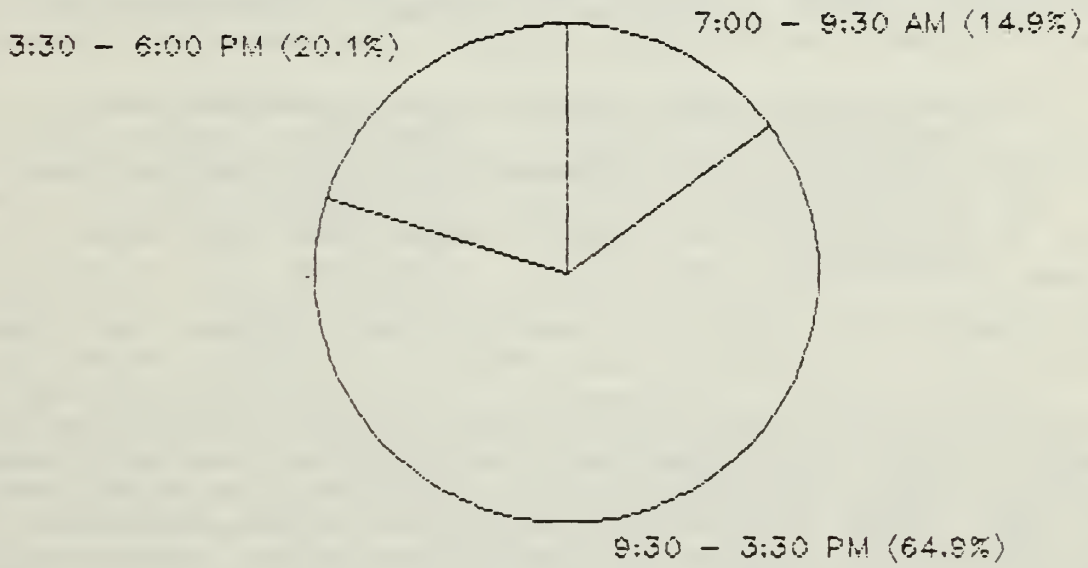
Of the 78 respondents to question (a) above,

42 respondents (54%) traveled to the downtown area less,
30 respondents (38%) traveled to the downtown area as much, and
6 respondents (8%) traveled to the downtown area more.



No. of Trips Taken	Sub	Non-Sub	All
0	8	12	20
1	59	47	106
2	20	27	47
3	26	21	47
4	10	6	16
5	32	3	35
6	2	1	3
7	2	2	4
8	3	1	4
9	1	0	1
10	10	0	10
Total	173	120	293
%	59.0	41.0	

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	WEEKLY USE OF THE RIDE BY SUBSCRIPTION AND NON-SUBSCRIPTION USERS	CTPS
Technical Report 53b January 1986		FIGURE 2-16



	FREQ	PERCENT
7:00 - 9:30 AM	20	14.9
9:30 - 3:30 PM	87	64.9
3:30 - 6:00 PM	27	20.1
TOTAL	134	

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	DISTRIBUTION OF DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR TRIPS BY TIME OF DAY Total Number of Respondents = 109	CTPS FIGURE 2-17
Technical Report 53b January 1986		

Of the 82 respondents to question (b), above,

32 respondents (39%) traveled to the downtown area less,
38 respondents (46%) traveled to the downtown area as much, and
12 respondents (15%) traveled to the downtown area more.

Sixty-eight respondents gave replies to both questions (a) and (b). These were used to compare downtown travel on the original RIDE system (which operated before 1982) and the "new" Distributor system, operating at present. The results of this comparison were as follows:

33 respondents (49%) traveled less under the "new' Distributor;
22 respondents (32%) traveled as much under the "new" Distributor;
4 respondents (6%) traveled more under the "new" Distributor.

For 9 respondents (13%), it was not clear whether there was a difference in downtown travel under the different services.

Overall, the data that are available indicate that, from the users' subjective perspective, they traveled into and out of the downtown less under either of the Distributor services than under THE RIDE. This conclusion is borne out by data developed in the service-characteristics portion of this study. These data indicate that in September 1981, six months prior to the Distributor's implementation, travel between the downtown and surrounding areas constituted 34% of all scheduled trips. One year later (in September 1982), downtown-periphery travel constituted 29% of all scheduled trips. And in September 1983, these trips made up only 25% of all scheduled trips. Beginning in January 1984, the Distributor was limited to operating during peak periods. Preliminary analysis of September 1984 ridership data suggests that downtown-periphery travel made up 30% of all scheduled trips.

Between 1981 and 1982, the service area was basically unchanged; in the 1982-1983 interval the service area roughly doubled in size. It might be argued that because the new area only contributed to the amount of "periphery" in the total service area, one would naturally expect to see more periphery-periphery trips. This hypothesis was tested using recent data, and it was found not to be the case. For a full discussion of this point, see CTPS Technical Report 53a, section 3.1.

Moreover, the service-characteristics study documented that the average travel time of linked trips between the downtown and peripheral areas roughly doubled as a result of instituting the Distributor. Thus, the decline in downtown-periphery travel can be understood as users' economically rational response to an

increase in their time cost in traveling into and out of the downtown area.

2.4 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE RIDE AND DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR

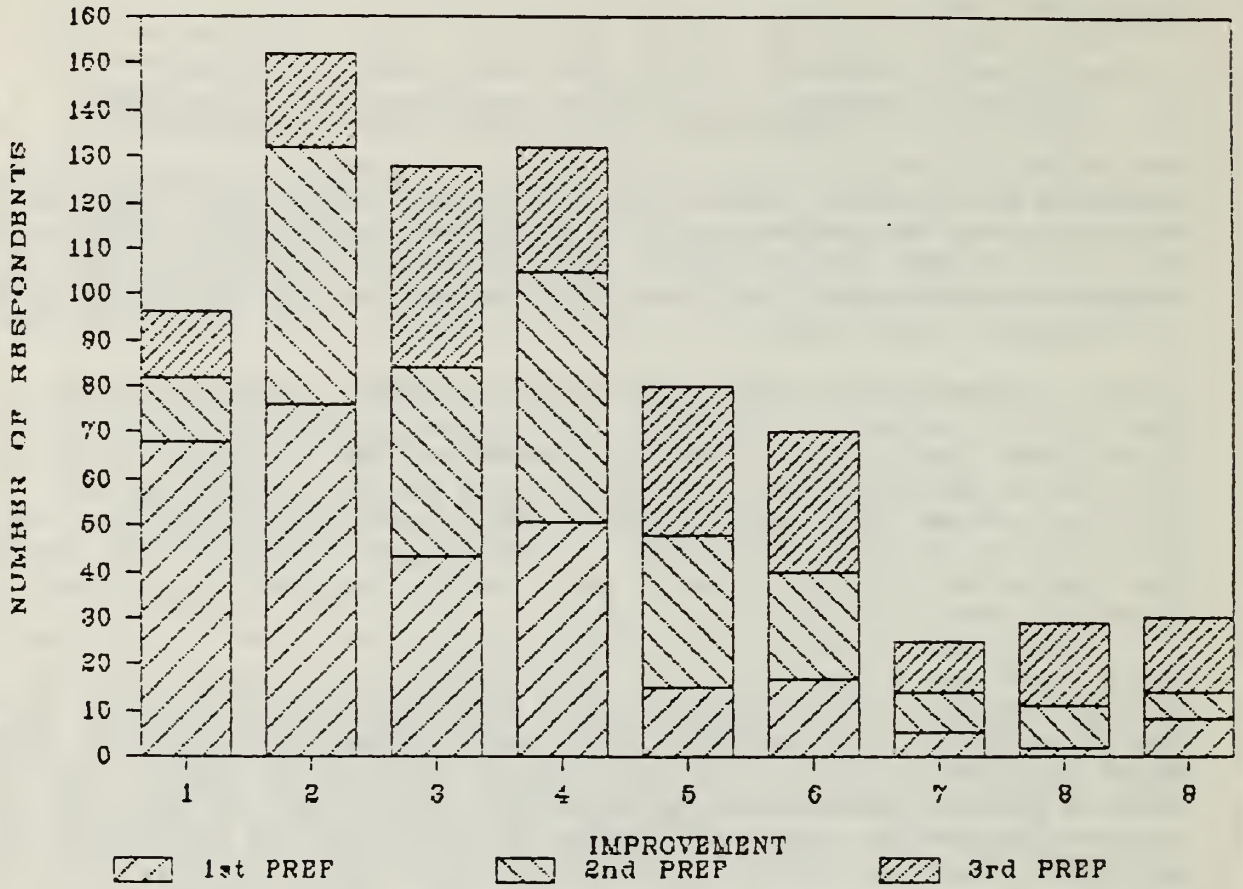
The survey form listed 9 suggestions for possibly improving the RIDE and Distributor services. Of these, users were asked to mark in order of preference the 3 suggestions that they would most like to see implemented. The number of occasions that each suggestion was specified as first, second, or third choice by the respondents is presented in Figure 2-18.

These data indicate that users' first choice would be to have their trip requests confirmed (or denied) during their initial phone call for service. As mentioned earlier, current practice for simple advance-reservation service is for a user to call three to seven days in advance of travel--although limited same-day service is also available. A call-back to confirm or deny the requested trip is usually made one or two days in advance of travel.

Users were not asked to trade off immediate trip confirmation against greater flexibility in the time span which defines an "on-time" pick-up. (To repeat, the MBTA considers pick-ups executed within 10 minutes of the scheduled pick-up time to be "on time.") Were immediate trip confirmation to be implemented, this tradeoff might be required during the morning and afternoon peak periods. The fact that users assigned a higher priority to changing the trip-confirmation process than to tightening up pick-up times could be reasonably interpreted as putting the importance of the former above that of the latter, but this is not conclusive.

Users' second choice was to see THE RIDE's service area expanded. The third choice was for all pick-ups to be made within 5 minutes of the scheduled time. It is not likely that this last improvement could be achieved if trips were to be confirmed immediately. This is due to limited resources and the scheduling procedures currently available to implement immediate trip confirmation. This conflict is explained in the section on increased toleration of deviation in pick-up time, later in this chapter.

The users' least favored change was further expansion of the Downtown Distributor. They also indicated that making fixed-route bus, heavy rail, and light rail accessible to disabled persons is a relatively low priority on this menu of possible service changes. Given the high level of service provided by paratransit, this finding is not surprising. It seems reasonable that current paratransit users would prefer to strengthen this service before acquiring access to general transit, which is characterized by lower levels of service.



Code	Improvement
1	Add more phone lines and reservation clerks
2	Confirm trip request immediately
3	Make all pick-up's within 5 minutes of scheduled time
4	Expand the Ride service area
5	Add more daytime Ride service
6	Add more nightime Ride service
7	Expand the service area covered by the Downtown Distributor
8	Add more accessible fixed route bus service
9	Make more subway and trolley service accessible.

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation Technical Report 53b January 1986	RESPONDENTS' PREFERENCES FOR SERVICE CHANGES	CTPS FIGURE 2-18

Subdivision of the RIDE Service Area

It has been proposed that, in the future, THE RIDE service area be divided into distinct sub-areas. Door-to-door service would be provided only within a sub-area and trips between sub-areas would require a transfer. In the survey, users were asked the length of time that they would be prepared to wait for a transfer --in good and in bad weather--in order to increase the scope of periphery-periphery service. The number of respondents who were prepared to wait up to specified lengths of time is presented in Figure 2-19.

In good weather,

91% were prepared to wait up to 10 minutes,
75% were prepared to wait up to 15 minutes, and
31% were prepared to wait up to 30 minutes.

In bad weather,

77% were prepared to wait up to 5 minutes,
53% were prepared to wait up to 10 minutes,
32% were prepared to wait up to 15 minutes.

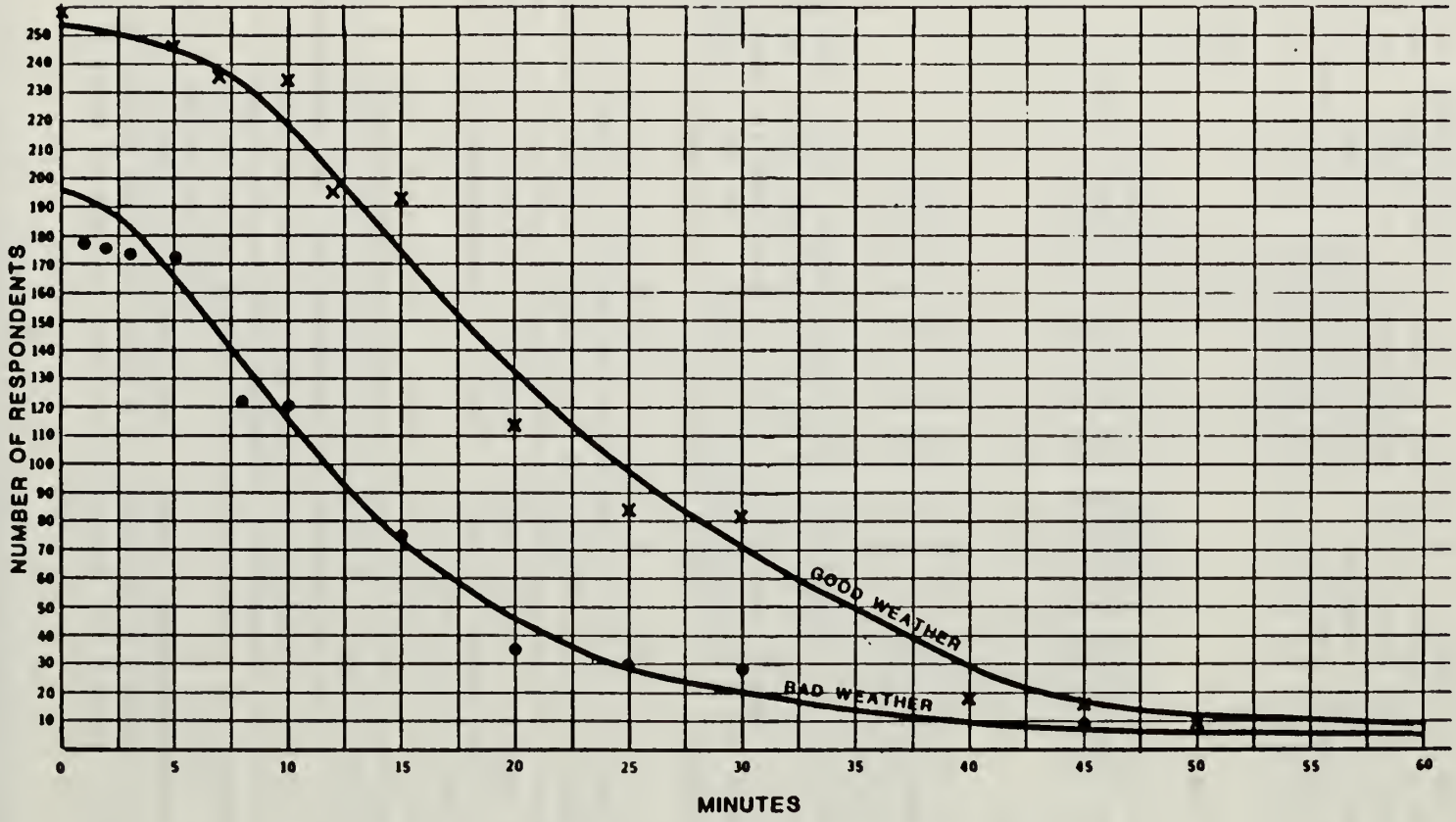
These data indicate a span of time over which most users would be reasonably willing to wait for a trip from one zone to another. In good weather, about one-half of all respondents would be willing to wait as long as twenty minutes. In bad weather, half of all respondents would be willing to wait up to twelve minutes.

These limits are critical to bear in mind when considering whether to create a multi-zone service area. If multiple service zones are created--necessitating transfers between zones--and transfers cannot be reasonably well guaranteed within the limits expressed by users, the probable effect will be for users to travel within the zone in which they live and avoid trips requiring a vehicle transfer.

A decision to move to a multi-zone system may produce a set of semi-independent zones. Travel from each zone to the downtown core is likely to be accomodated, because of the widespread demand for unique destinations located within the downtown. The issue which must be carefully considered is circumferential movement. The demand for this kind of movement is likely to be less intense than demand for travel to the urban core and, thus, is more likely to be compromised. Consideration should be given to the costs this would be likely to impose on users and to service tradeoffs which might be adopted to mitigate the negative effects of a multi-zone service system.

User Flexibility Regarding Changes from Scheduled Pick-up Times to Allow More RIDE Trips

Users were asked to specify by how much time they would be



Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation Technical Report 53b January 1986	MAXIMUM TRANSFER WAIT TIMES IN GOOD AND BAD WEATHER	CTPS FIGURE 2-19

willing to deviate from their desired pick-up time for non-essential RIDE trips in order to make it possible, in general, for more trips to be provided. The respondents' levels of flexibility are shown in Figure 2-20. Sixty-five percent of the respondents were prepared for their pick-up time to deviate by as much as 15 minutes. Only 36% were willing for the pick-up time to deviate by as much as 30 minutes.

This expressed level of flexibility may be less relevant for some trips purposes than for others. The service-characteristics portion of this study indicates that roughly 33% of all scheduled one-way trips are undertaken for work or medical purposes. These purposes, because they tend to have strictly defined start times, tend to preclude flexibility in trip pick-up time. This may also be true of many education-related trips, which make up 5% of all one-way trips. The other 62% of scheduled one-way trips have greater potential for accommodating flexibility in trip pick-up time. Trips for social and other purposes can usually be flexible as to their start time. The same is true of many home-bound trips.

These data and those in the previous section indicate users' willingness to tolerate increased deviation from their desired pick-up time, or to wait at intermediate transfer points, in exchange for more service. Patrons may also be willing to do so in exchange for service improvements such as immediate trip confirmation.

The immediate-trip-confirmation procedure contemplated by the MBTA could involve extending the time interval which defines "on time" service beyond the current standard of ten minutes on either side of the scheduled pick-up time.[1] This survey indicates that users may be amenable to broadening this window to 15, or even 20, minutes on either side of the scheduled pick-up time.[2] A window approaching 30 minutes appears to be unacceptable.

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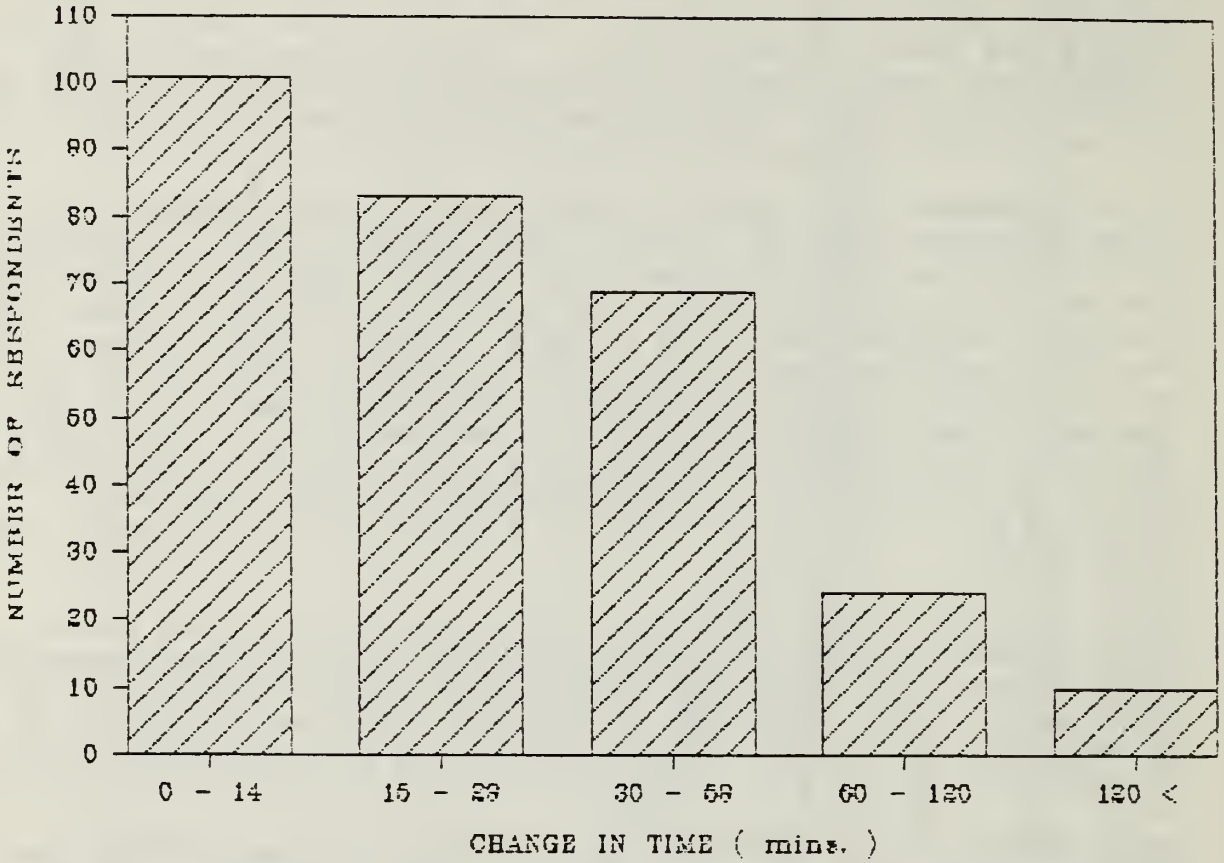
[1]As trip requests come to the scheduler, they are assigned to a particular vehicle. As trip requests accumulate, a "rational" or efficient tour is defined for each vehicle. The last trip requests added are often "squeezed in." In this squeezing-in process--which increases vehicle productivity--the passenger-trips before and after a squeezed-in trip may have their actual pick-up times pushed forward and backward, respectively, from their scheduled pick-up times.

[2]Such a change would be most likely to affect passenger pick-up times during the A.M. and P.M. peak periods, when demand for service is highest. This would be likely to negatively affect employment- and education-related trips, because they make up a high percentage of peak-period trips; medical trips would tend not to be as significantly affected.



	FREQ	PERCENT	CUM FREQ
0 - 14	101	35.2	35.2
15 - 29	83	28.9	64.1
30 - 59	69	24.0	88.2
60 - 120	24	8.4	96.5
120 <	10	3.5	100.0
Total	287		

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation Technical Report 53b January 1986	FLEXIBILITY IN PICK-UP TIME FOR NON-ESSENTIAL TRIPS	CTPS FIGURE 2-20

Users' Suggestions and Comments

The final portion of the survey asked respondents to include any suggestions or comments which they might have. A selection of these is included in Appendix D.

3 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions that have been drawn are based on observations made of the sample population. Those respondents who completed and returned their surveys may or may not be representative of the total population of all registered users of THE RIDE and the Distributor. There is no current, accurate data with which to assess the sample's representativeness.

3.1 SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SERVICE USERS

There appear to be a large number of RIDE users who reside in Brookline and Brighton. However, service usage was roughly the same for respondents living in Brookline and Brighton (2.5 and 2.3 trips per week, respectively) as for respondents living in other districts. Women over 55 years of age made up 61% of the survey respondents, whereas they made up only 13% of the Boston SMSA population (1980 census).

Many RIDE and Distributor users appear to belong to low-income, one-person households. Forty percent of the respondents had an income of less than $5,000 per year (in 1984 dollars), and 73% had incomes of less than $10,000 per year. These proportions are high, compared with 12% and 26%, respectively, for the population of the Boston SMSA in general (in 1979 dollars). It is not surprising that such a large proportion of respondents had a low income, since 57% were either retired or unemployed. Well over half (60%) of all respondents lived on their own, while for the whole of the Boston SMSA this rate is only 26% of all households.

One can conclude that most RIDE and Distributor users are very dependent on the service for mobility. Fifty-four percent of the respondents never had a car available as an alternative to THE RIDE, and 78% were neither able nor licensed to drive.

The conventional wisdom is that as individuals become more severely disabled, they travel less. But the survey results indicate that RIDE users in wheelchairs made an average of 3.5 round-trips per week, non-wheelchair users only 2.6. This difference may be more apparent than real, however, since non-wheelchair users may have alternative means of transport available to them, such as taking a taxi, so that their total trip-making rate may be higher than their rate of RIDE usage.

3.2 USERS' ASSESSMENT OF THE RIDE AND DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR

Users appear to be generally satisfied with a broad range of RIDE service characteristics. For example, when asked to rate their ability to get the trips they requested (5 for very good, and 1 for very bad) the average grade was 4.0. The average scores for RIDE characteristics ranged from 3.9 to 4.6.

Wheelchair users rated service a little lower than did most other users. The average scores from this group ranged from 3.6 to 4.3. The difference in ratings is difficult to explain. It is not likely that wheelchair users received significantly different service from that given to other users. It may be that the rating difference reflects a difference between user-group expectations.

The respondents gauged that 77% of their rides arrived within 10 minutes of scheduled pick-up time. The MBTA considers a pick-up within these limits to be "on time." Evidence from the service-characteristics portion of this study indicates that, in fact, 85% of all completed trips are begun within 10 minutes of scheduled pick-up time. Since the extension of service to new areas, there has been concern that service in these new areas is less punctual than in the old. The data presented in Figure 2-10, however, argue that this is not the case.

Eighty percent of RIDE and Distributor users were denied no more than 1 trip per week. Unfortunately, the survey did not differentiate between the responses 0 and 1. Thus, it is not possible to identify the number of users who were never denied trips. Given that a typical user made an average of 3 round-trips per month, even one denial might be considered significant. It would be particularly problematic for those who require the service regularly--employed persons, students, etc.--and who are not subscription users.

When the RIDE service area was expanded, concern was expressed by users that a higher than usual number of trips would be denied in the new service areas. There is some support for this in the geographical presentation in Figure 2-12. An independent 1984 data set also corroborates this thesis. It should be noted that the dynamics of service expansion under relatively tight fiscal constraints require a tradeoff to be made between an unusually high trip-not-available rate and lower overall vehicle productivity (lower efficiency).

It is the policy of THE RIDE to treat equally trip requests made between 3 and 7 days before travel. This policy appears to have been followed, as evidenced by the data presented in Figure 2-13, in that there was no difference in trip-denial rate due to the length of advance reservation period.

THE RIDE's policy in allocating trips between wheelchair and non-

wheelchair users is somewhat complex. Stated simply, it is that when a choice must be made between providing service to two users --one in a wheelchair, and the other ambulatory--all other things being equal, priority is given to the wheelchair user. The data in Figure 2-11 indicate that the rate at which trips were provided (and denied) to wheelchair users was roughly the same as that for non-wheelchair users.

One can infer that the majority of RIDE users did not use the Downtown Distributor. In the survey, respondents were prompted to skip the section on the Downtown Distributor if they did not use this service. The section was skipped by 78% of the respondents; it is likely that roughly the same percentage of users did not use the Distributor.

For those who used the Downtown Distributor, the average waiting time for its arrival was 15 minutes, which corresponds to the headway[1] of the Distributor.

The Downtown Distributor was designed to improve overall vehicle productivity, provide access for mobility-impaired patrons using accessible transportation at Park Street and Haymarket stations, and eliminate users' need to make advance reservations by phone.

The vehicle-productivity issue is addressed at length in CTPS Technical Report 53a. The analysis concluded that overall vehicle productivity was unaffected by the Distributor.

While the survey did not address the question of how many passenger transfers were made at Park Street and Haymarket stations, it can be inferred from the passenger logs that there were very few.

The survey results did show that 90% of those using the Distributor made advance phone reservations for the service. Data in CTPS Technical Report 53a (chapter 5) indicate that some Distributor vehicles did not operate for significant portions of some afternoons. This phenomenon may have contributed to potential users' calling in advance for service reservations.

In summary, the Downtown Distributor did not operate as originally contemplated. Rather, it appeared to operate in much the same way as THE RIDE.

3.3 PATTERNS OF USAGE OF THE RIDE AND DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR

CTPS Technical Report 53a indicates that most trips are home-based trips. The user-survey data also show that approximately

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[1]The interval of time between successive vehicles along the route.

15% of users work full-time or part-time. However, a much larger proportion (44%) of RIDE trips are for work purposes. It is likely that this high percentage is due to employed users regularly using THE RIDE to travel to and from work. Other RIDE trips are for medical purposes (21%), social purposes (21%), and school (10%).

A question was posed in the survey to determine whether the respondent was a subscription or non-subscription user of THE RIDE. In reply to this question, many respondents claimed to be subscribers, although they also claimed to make less than 3 round-trips per week (in order to qualify as a subscription RIDE user, a user must make at least 3 round trips per week.) This casts some doubt on the validity of the results from this survey question.

Of the respondents who had used the Downtown Distributor before, the majority (65%) travel after January 1984 tended to travel to the downtown area in the off-peak hours, when the Distributor was not in service. Since off-peak hours are only 45% of total service time, there is some indication that their users are avoiding the use of the Downtown Distributor. This would imply some dissatisfaction with the Downtown Distributor service.

Users were asked to make a comparison of their frequency of downtown travel before and after changes were made to the downtown service. After the "old" Distributor service replaced the original RIDE service in March 1982, users' travel to the downtown area generally decreased. When the "new" Distributor service replaced the "old" Distributor service in January 1984, the majority of users tended to travel to the downtown area less than or as much as they had under the "old" Distributor. These results are based on a relatively small number of responses, but empirical data in CTPS Technical Report 53a confirm that travel into and out of the downtown has decreased as a percentage of all travel on the RIDE system.

3.4 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE RIDE AND DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR

The strongest preference was expressed for the implementation of immediate confirmation of trip requests. Next--and equal--in order of preference were the following: to expand the RIDE service area; to make all pick-ups within 5 minutes of scheduled time; and to add more phone lines and reservation clerks.

If the service area is divided into sub-areas, as has been proposed, the system should be designed so that the maximum wait time is 15 minutes in good weather and 5 minutes in bad weather. These wait times should be considered upper limits. If wait time approaches or exceeds these limits, the effect will be to discourage movement between sub-areas.

The majority (65%) of RIDE users are willing to tolerate increased deviation from scheduled pick-up time (for non-essential trips)--deviations of as much as 15, or even 20, minutes--to facilitate an increase in the number of trips available. However, most users appear unwilling to accept deviations approaching or exceeding 30 minutes.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing data, the following seven recommendations can be made to improve service on the MBTA's RIDE and Downtown Distributor.

1) To establish a procedure for confirming trip requests immediately would satisfy the users' first priority. The trip-scheduling procedure would have to be computer-assisted, in order to handle the number of individual vehicle schedules required at current and future demand levels. Significant changes to the present method of scheduling would be required.

2) There should be a policy of asking users whether they are willing and able to be flexible about their RIDE pick-up time for specific trips. When possible, the user would specify for the dispatcher a range of time in which he or she would be prepared to begin the requested trip. This flexibility would allow the scheduler to try to accomodate the trip within the specified window of time.

If this system were adopted in conjunction with immediate trip confirmation, the dispatcher could usually grant trips immediately within the agreed upon time-frame. In most cases the exact pick-up time would remain approximate. In the event that a trip request could only be accomodated outside the agreed-upon range, a revised pick-up time would be offered in a call-back system similar to the one operating now. This system would work on a first-come-first-served basis. It could be expected to reduce the number of days in advance of travel that trip requests need be made.

3) The MBTA should consider issuing vouchers to its ambulatory users for use on other types of paratransit, e.g., taxis.

Wheelchair users make up about 27% of all RIDE users. It is this group, primarily, which requires use of the lift on vans. Some ambulatory users make use of the lift. But both of these lift-user groups are still likely to represent a minority of all users. For these users, the present RIDE service will continue to be necessary.

For most ambulatory users, however, more typical paratransit service, e.g., taxi service, may be quite appropriate. Vouchers could be issued for such service. At present THE RIDE has excess capacity during the daytime off-peak period. Consequently, vouchers are likely to be necessary to handle peak-period demand only.

The adoption of a voucher system to supplement THE RIDE should permit short-term expansion of service with the present vehicle fleet. A RIDE/voucher system would also allow increases in demand to be met with a lower capital-expenditure-to-service ratio than is presently possible. The total-expenditure-to-service ratio with a RIDE/voucher system is also likely to be lower than the current ratio because the unit costs of taxi service tend to be considerably lower than those of specialized van service.

4) The Downtown Distributor should be discontinued. Only a small portion of RIDE users actually use the Distributor service, and travelers seem consciously to avoid the service. From a user's perspective the continuation of this system of service is of questionable value.

Were the necessary changes made to stimulate use by the transportation-handicapped of accessible heavy rail and fixed-route buses (at Park Street and Haymarket stations, respectively), it would be rational to institute the Distributor or a similar system. Until such time as these changes are made, continuation of the Distributor cannot be justified.[1]

5) Some alternative method for users to signal the Downtown Distributor vehicle should be considered, if this service is continued. Users have complained of difficulty in flagging down the vehicle. In addition, at least one driver found it hazardous to concentrate on both driving and scouting for possible users.

6) It is recommended that an improved public-information effort be made. In the course of the survey it became apparent from users' unstructured comments (see Appendix D) that many RIDE users are unaware of the range of services available or misunderstand the procedure for scheduling rides.

A number of survey respondents mentioned a newsletter which appears to be published sporadically. The dissemination of this newsletter on a continuing and steady basis would seem to be an appropriate way to reach current RIDE users. To enroll new users, such a newsletter could be distributed to targeted special-needs groups.

7) The no-smoking regulation should be strictly enforced on RIDE vehicles. Some riders registered complaints about the smoking that occurs. Drivers should receive periodic re-training to re-familiarize them with existing policies--such as the no-smoking policy and the requirement for drivers to set the safety gate on the lift (the infraction of which a small minority of users saw as a problem)--and to encourage them to actively follow these policies.

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[1]Downtown Distributor service was, in fact, discontinued in May 1985, when this report was in draft form.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY FORM

Special Needs Transportation User Survey

THIS SURVEY IS BEING DONE BY THE CENTRAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING STAFF TO HELP ASSESS WHO USES THE RIDE AND THE DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR AND TO IMPROVE THESE SERVICES. PLEASE ANSWER AS MANY QUESTIONS AS YOU CAN.

IF YOU HAVE A VISUAL IMPAIRMENT AND WOULD PREFER TO USE A LARGE PRINT VERSION OF THIS SURVEY OR TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY BY PHONE, PLEASE CALL 973-7100.

THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL. IT WILL NOT AFFECT YOUR ELIGIBILITY FOR THESE SERVICES.

WHEN YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE QUESTIONNAIRE, PLEASE MAIL IT. WE WILL PAY THE POSTAGE.

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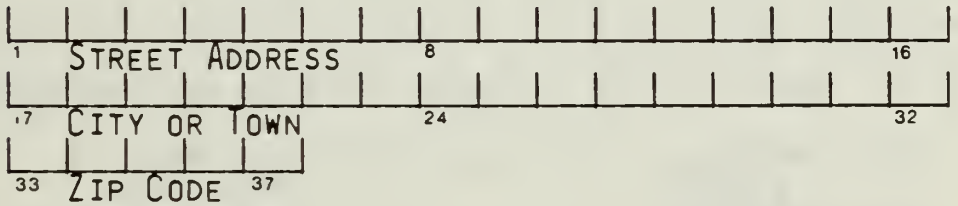
1. WHAT IS YOUR ADDRESS? PLEASE ENTER ONE LETTER OR NUMBER PER BLOCK.



2. SEX:

38-1( ) FEMALE -2( ) MALE

3. AGE:

39-1( ) UNDER 15 YEARS
-2( ) 15-24 YEARS
-3( ) 25-34 YEARS
-4( ) 35-44 YEARS
-5( ) 45-54 YEARS
-6( ) 55-64 YEARS
-7( ) 65-74 YEARS
-8( ) 75 YEARS AND OVER

4. OCCUPATION:

40-1( ) WORKING FULL TIME
-2( ) WORKING PART TIME
-3( ) UNEMPLOYED
-4( ) RETIRED
-5( ) STUDENT
-6( ) HOMEMAKER
-7( ) OTHER

5. INCOME:

41-1( ) UNDER $5,000
-2( ) $5,000-$9,999
-3( ) $10,000-$14,999
-4( ) $15,000-$19,999
-5( ) $20,000-$24,999
-6( ) $25,000 AND OVER

6. HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD?

42-1( ) 1 PERSON
-2( ) 2 PERSONS
-3( ) 3 PERSONS
-4( ) 4 PERSONS
-5( ) 5 PERSONS AND OVER

7. ARE YOU ABLE TO DRIVE?

43-1( ) YES -2( ) NO

8. ARE YOU LICENSED TO DRIVE?

44-1( ) YES -2( ) NO

9. HOW MANY AUTOS ARE THERE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD?

45-1( ) NONE
2( ) ONE AUTO
-3( ) 2 AUTOS
-4( ) 3 AUTOS OR MORE

10. HOW OFTEN DO YOU HAVE AN AUTO AVAILABLE TO MAKE YOUR RIDE TRIPS?

46-1( ) ALWAYS
-2( ) USUALLY
-3( ) SOMETIMES
-4( ) INFREQUENTLY
-5( ) NEVER

11. DO YOU USUALLY USE A MOBILITY DEVICE?

47-1( ) YES -2( ) NO

IF SO, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DEVICES DO YOU USUALLY USE?

48-1( ) CANE
-2( ) WALKER
-3( ) BRACES
-4( ) MANUAL WHEELCHAIR
-5( ) ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR
-6( ) DOG
-7( ) ASSISTANT
-8( ) OTHER

48 ____
49 ____

12. HOW MANY ROUND TRIPS PER WEEK DO YOU USUALLY MAKE ON THE RIDE AND THE DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR? PLEASE PROVIDE A RESPONSE FOR EACH SERVICE SEPARATELY.

THE RIDE: |_|_| 51 ROUND TRIPS PER WEEK.

THE DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR: |_|_| 53 ROUND TRIPS PER WEEK.

13. ARE YOU A SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE USER OF THE RIDE?

54-1( ) YES -2( ) NO

14. FOR YOUR NON-SUBSCRIPTION TRIPS, HOW FAR IN ADVANCE OF TRAVEL DO YOU USUALLY CALL THE RIDE TO SCHEDULE A TRIP?

55-1( ) SAME DAY
-2( ) 1 DAY
-3( ) 2-3 DAYS
-4( ) 4-5 DAYS
-5( ) 6-7 DAYS
-6( ) 8 DAYS OR MORE

15. IN MAKING RESERVATIONS FOR THE RIDE, HOW MANY OF YOUR SERVICE REQUESTS ARE DENIED PER WEEK?

56-1( ) 0-1 TRIP DENIED
-2( ) 1-2 TRIPS DENIED
-3( ) 3-4 TRIPS DENIED
-4( ) 5 OR MORE TRIPS DENIED

16. OF YOUR LAST TEN RIDE TRIPS, HOW MANY ARRIVED EARLY, ON TIME, OR LATE, RELATIVE TO YOU SCHEDULED PICK-UP TIME? PLEASE PROVIDE THE INFORMATION IN THE BLOCKS BELOW:

EARLY: |__|__| (58) TRIPS BY |__|__| (60) MINUTES.

ON TIME: |__|__| (62) TRIPS

LATE: |__|__| (64) TRIPS BY |__|__| (66) MINUTES.

17. BY CHANGING YOUR PICK UP TIME FOR NON-ESSENTIAL TRIPS, I.E. SHOPPING OR VISITING, IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE MORE RIDE SERVICE. BY HOW MUCH WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO CHANGE YOUR DESIRED PICK UP TIME TO RECEIVE AN ADDITIONAL RIDE TRIP?

67-1( ) 0-14 MINUTES
-2( ) 15-29 MINUTES
-3( ) 30-59 MINUTES
-4( ) 1-2 HOURS
-5( ) 2-3 HOURS
-6( ) 3 HOURS OR MORE

18. CURRRENTLY, RIDE USERS CAN TRAVEL WITHIN THE BOSTON CORE AREA OR WITHIN OTHER COMMUNITIES ADJACENT TO BOSTON. BY TRANSFERRING FROM ONE RIDE VEHICLE TO ANOTHER, IT MAY BE POSSIBLE FOR RIDE USERS TO TRAVEL BETWEEN COMMUNITIES, SUCH AS BETWEEN DORCHESTER AND WATERTOWN. HOW LONG WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO WAIT AT AN INTERMEDIATE TRANSFER POINT TO MAKE THIS KIND OF TRIP?

IN GOOD OR MODERATE WEATHER: |__|__| (69) MINUTES.

IN BAD WEATHER: |__|__| (7) MINUTES.

IF YOU USE THE DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR, PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS. IF NOT, SKIP TO QUESTION 26.

19. THE "OLD" DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR OPERATED BETWEEN MARCH 1982 AND JANUARY 1984. UNDER THIS SERVICE, ALL TRIPS MADE INTO AND OUT OF THE DOWNTOWN AREA DURING DAYTIME HOURS REQUIRED YOU TO USE THE DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR. WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW THIS REQUIREMENT AFFECTED YOUR DOWNTOWN TRAVEL. RELATIVE TO THE SERVICE PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED BY THE RIDE, DID YOU TRAVEL IN THE DOWNTOWN:

72-1( ) LESS THAN YOU USED TO?
-2( ) THE SAME AS YOU USED TO?
-3( ) MORE THAN YOU USED TO?

20. UNDER THE "NEW" DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR, ONLY MORNING AND AFTERNOON PEAK HOUR TRIPS TO AND FROM THE DOWNTOWN AREA REQUIRE YOU TO USE THE DISTRIBUTOR. HOW HAS THIS SERVICE CHANGE AFFECTED YOUR DOWNTOWN TRAVEL? RELATIVE TO THE "OLD" DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR, DO YOU NOW TRAVEL IN THE DOWNTOWN:

73-1( ) LESS THAN YOU USED TO?
-2( ) THE SAME AS YOU USED TO?
-3( ) MORE THAN YOU USED TO?

21. WHEN YOU NOW TRAVEL IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA, DURING WHAT PERIOD OR PERIODS OF THE DAY DO YOU USUALLY TRAVEL?

76-1( ) 7:00-9:30 A.M.
-2( ) 9:30 A.M.-3:30 P.M
-3( ) 3:30-6:00 P.M.
-4( ) 6:00-11:00 P.M.
-5( ) ALL OF THE ABOVE

74 ____
75 ____
76 ____

22. DO YOU CHANGE YOUR TIME OF TRAVEL TO THE DOWNTOWN TO AVOID USING THE DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR?

77-1( ) YES
-2( ) NO

IF SO, HOW OFTEN DO YOU CHANGE YOUR TIME OF TRAVEL?

78-1( ) ALWAYS
-2( ) FREQUENTLY
-3( ) SOMETIMES
-4( ) INFREQUENTLY
-5( ) NEVER

23. WHEN YOU WANT TO USE THE DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR, DO YOU USUALLY PHONE IN AN ADVANCE RESERVATION?

79-1( ) YES
-2( ) NO

24. WHEN YOU USE THE DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR, HOW LONG MUST YOU USUALLY WAIT FOR THE DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR?

80-1( ) LESS THAN 10 MINUTES
-2( ) 10-19 MINUTES
-3( ) 20-29 MINUTES
-4( ) 30-44 MINUTES
-5( ) 45-59 MINUTES
-6( ) 1 HOUR OR LONGER

25. WHEN YOU USE THE DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR, HOW OFTEN ARE YOU ABLE TO SIGNAL IT TO STOP FOR YOU ANYWHERE ALONG THE ROUTE?

81-1( ) ALWAYS
-2( ) FREQUENTLY
-3( ) SOMETIMES
-4( ) INFREQUENTLY
-5( ) NEVER

26. IF YOU COULD MAKE ONLY THREE CHANGES TO THE RIDE AND THE DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CHANGES WOULD YOU MAKE? PLEASE RANK YOUR PROPOSED CHANGES BY MARKING 1 FOR YOUR FIRST CHANGE, 2 FOR YOUR SECOND, AND 3 FOR YOUR THIRD.

( ) ADD MORE PHONE LINES AND RESERVATION CLERKS
( ) CONFIRM TRIP REQUESTS IMMEDIATELY
( ) MAKE ALL PICK-UP'S WITHIN 5 MINUTES OF SCHEDULED TIME
( ) EXPAND THE RIDE SERVICE AREA
( ) ADD MORE DAYTIME RIDE SERVICE
( ) ADD MORE NIGHTIME RIDE SERVICE
( ) EXPAND THE SERVICE AREA COVERED BY THE DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR
( ) ADD MORE ACCESSIBLE FIXED ROUTE BUS SERVICE
( ) MAKE MORE SUBWAY AND TROLLEY SERVICE ACCESSIBLE

82 ____
83 ____
84 ____

27. On the left, below, are listed several service characteristics. Please circle a number after each measure to indicate how you feel about THE RIDE service?

	Very Good		Average		Very Bad	
Phone service quality (How easy is it to get through to a reservation clerk?)	5	4	3	2	1	(85)
Service Availability (Your ability to get the trips you request)	5	4	3	2	1	
Reliability of the phone-back procedure to confirm your reservation	5	4	3	2	1	(87)
When necessary, ability to speak with the dispatcher	5	4	3	2	1	
Mechanical reliability of the lift	5	4	3	2	1	(89)
Reliability of driver's setting the lift's safety gate in the locked position	5	4	3	2	1	
Mechanical reliability of the vehicle	5	4	3	2	1	(91)
Vehicle cleanliness	5	4	3	2	1	
Service reliability (A vehicle will come, even if it is late)	5	4	3	2	1	(93)
General driver courtesy	5	4	3	2	1	

Thank you for completing this survey. Please write any comments or suggestions in the space below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Now, please fold the questionnaire over so that the return address is facing outward, staple it closed, and drop it in any mail box.

APPENDIX B

DATA SOURCES FOR FIGURES 2-1, 2-2, 2-3, AND 2-12 (3-D MAPS)

Passenger's Residence	No. of Respondents
Boston Core	12
Back Bay	23
South End	7
Roxbury	7
Roxbury Crossing	3
Grove Hall	4
Fields Corner	4
Codman Square	13
Uphams Corner	2
Mattapan	4
South Boston	13
East Boston	19
Charlestown	5
Jamaica Plain	20
Roslindale	7
West Roxbury	8
Allston	10
Brighton	60
Hyde Park	8
Cambridge	24
Union Square	3
W. Somerville	6
Winter Hill	9
Brookline	137
Malden	11
Everett	6
Chelsea	7
Winthrop	5
Newton Center	8
Newtonville	1
Chestnut Hill	10
Watertown	17
Arlington	6
Belmont	1
Kenmore/Fenway	11
	491

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation Technical Report 53b January 1986	TOTAL NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE	CTPS TABLE B-1

Passenger's Residence	No. of Trips
Boston Core	13
Back Bay	74
South End	5
Roxbury	2
Roxbury Crossing	2
Grove Hall	9
Fields Corner	8
Codman Square	25
Uphams Corner	2
Mattapan	1
South Boston	31
East Boston	42
Charlestown	19
Jamaica Plain	44
Roslindale	10
West Roxbury	13
Allston	14
Brighton	100
Hyde Park	9
Cambridge	66
Union Square	7
W. Somerville	5
Winter Hill	10
Brookline	202
Malden	4
Everett	8
Chelsea	8
Winthrop	10
Newton Center	12
Newtonville	0
Chestnut Hill	18
Watertown	36
Arlington	8
Belmont	1
Kenmore/Fenway	32
	850

Passenger's Residence	Avg. No. of Trips
Boston Core	4.4
Roxbury	n.a.
Roxbury Crossing	n.a.
Grove Hall	n.a.
Field Corner	n.a.
Codman Square	3.1
Upham's Corner	n.a.
Mattapan	n.a.
South Boston	4.4
East Boston	3.5
Charlestown	3.8
Jamaica Plain	2.9
Roslindale	2.0
West Roxbury	2.2
Allston	2.0
Brighton	2.3
Hyde Park	1.8
Cambridge	3.5
Union Square	n.a.
W. Somerville	n.a.
Winter Hill	1.3
Brookline	2.5
Malden	n.a.
Everett	1.6
Chelsea	1.6
Winthrop	n.a.
Newton Center	n.a.
Newtonville	n.a.
Chestnut Hill	2.4
Watertown	2.0
Arlington	n.a.
Belmont	n.a.
Kenmore/Fenway	1.0

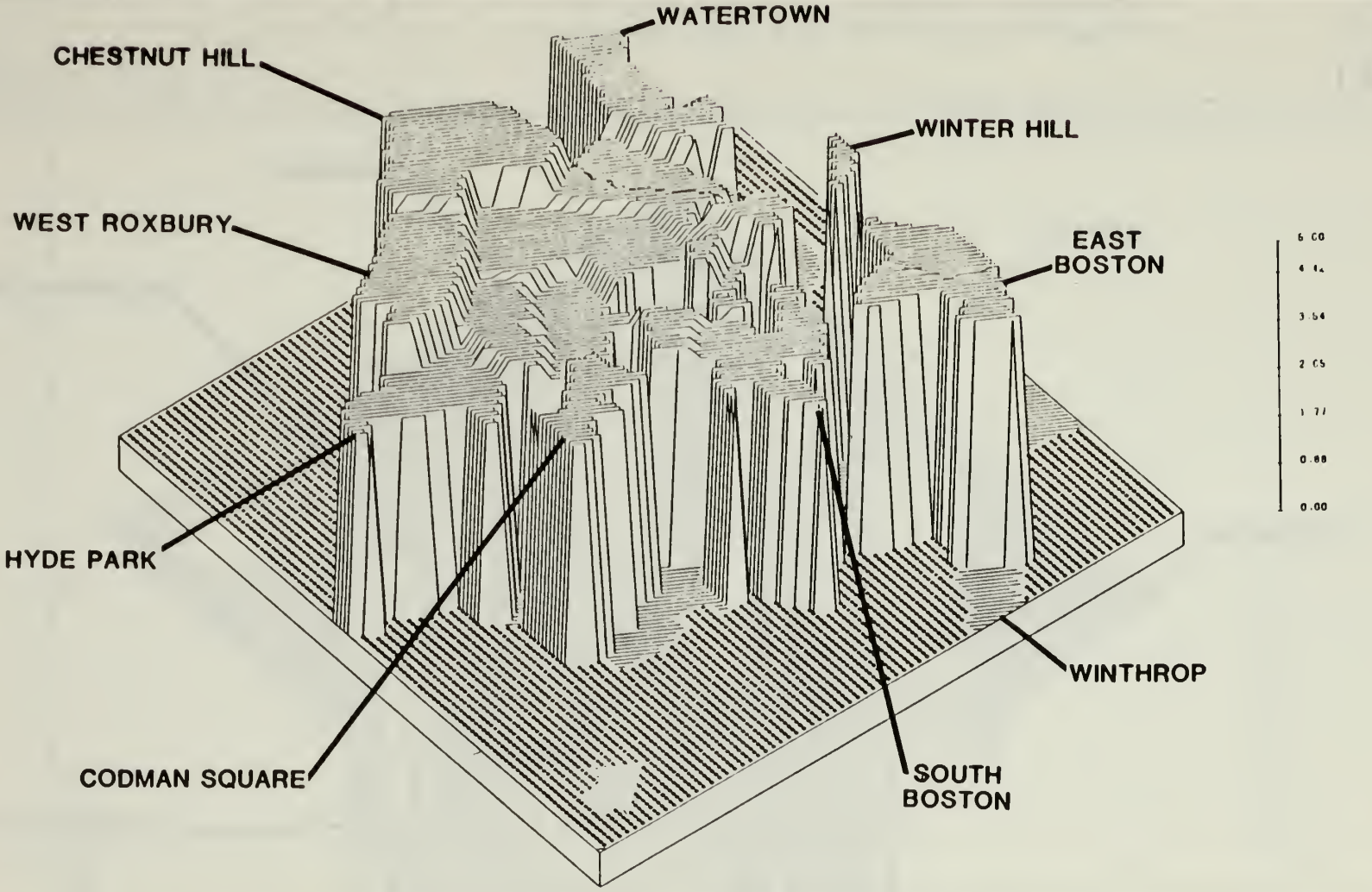
Passenger's Residence	No. of Trips Denied
Boston Core	0.5
Back Bay	0.8
South End	1.1
Roxbury	1.0
Codman Square	0.6
South Boston	0.5
East Boston	0.7
Jamaica Plain	1.2
West Roxbury	0.7
Allston	1.4
Brighton	0.8
Hyde Park	0.9
Cambridge	0.8
Somerville	0.5
Brookline	0.7
Malden	1.3
Chelsea	0.7
Chestnut Hill	0.5
Watertown	0.6
Arlington	0.8
Kenmore/Fenway	0.9

Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	AVERAGE NUMBER OF ROUND TRIPS DENIED PER WEEK BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE	CTPS TABLE B-4
Technical Report 53b January 1986		

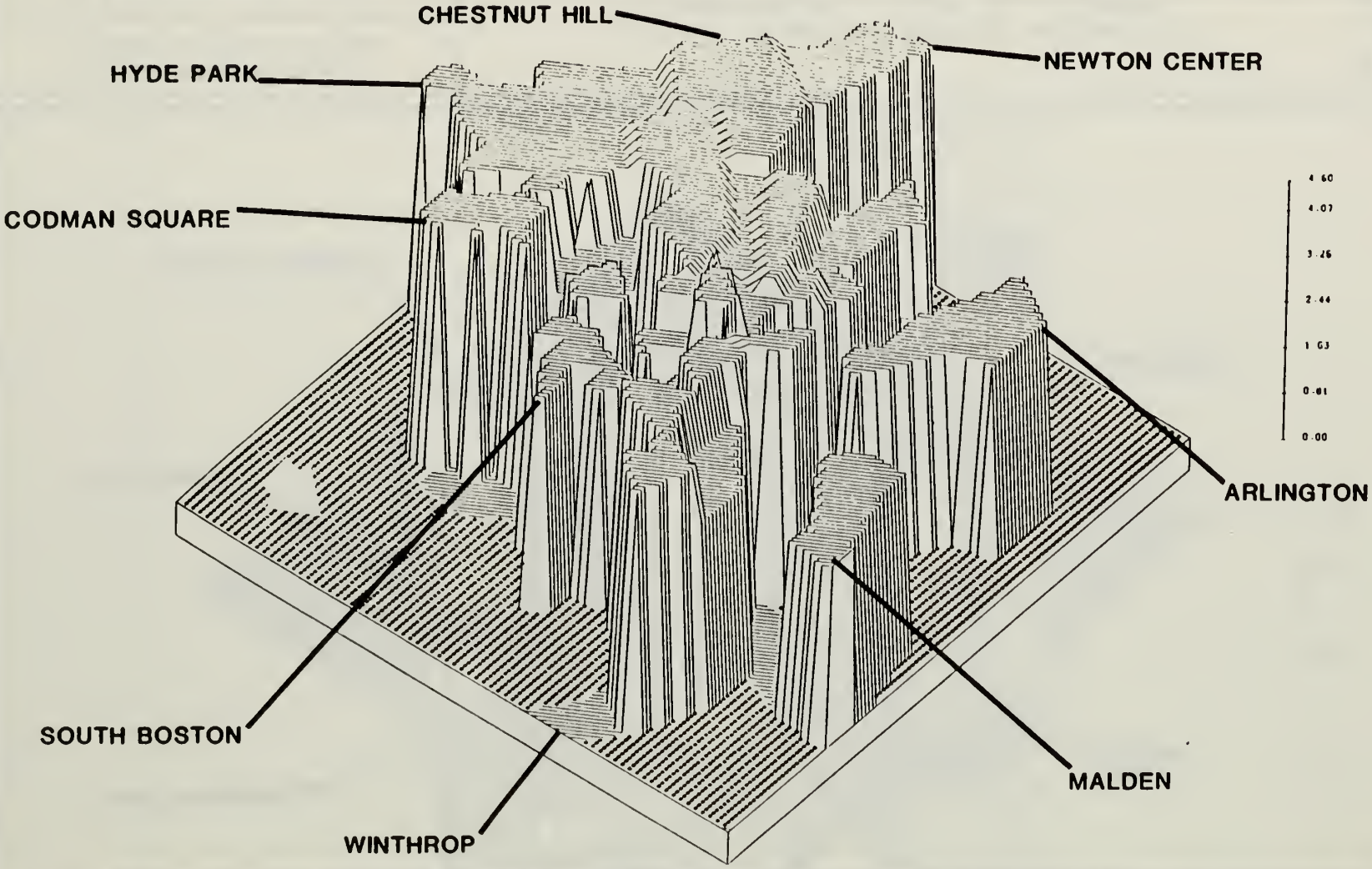
APPENDIX C

3-D MAPS OF SERVICE-RELIABILITY AND -AVAILABILITY SCORES

It was thought that the availability and reliability of service in the "new" service areas might not be at the standard provided within the "old" areas. To test this hypothesis, service-availability and service-reliability ratings were calculated separately for the "new" and "old" service areas, using the respondents' home addresses. The results are presented in Figures C-1 and C-2. Because the sample size was often small in the "new" areas, the representativeness of the scores is questionable.



Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation	AVERAGE SCORE FOR SERVICE RELIABILITY BY RESPONDENTS' PLACE OF RESIDENCE	CTPS
Technical Report 53b January 1986		FIGURE C-1



Special-Needs Transportation Evaluation Technical Report 53b January 1986	AVERAGE SCORE FOR SERVICE AVAILABILITY BY RESPONDENTS' PLACE OF RESIDENCE	CTPS FIGURE C-2

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS OF USERS

Sample Comments and Suggestions of Users

"Excellent survey. Drivers need better training and supervision. Vehicle should be checked more often."

"Pick-up is much better. In beginning, I have waited an hour at times, thus missing my clinic appointment. For past month have been picked up on time. Maybe should use driver more familiar with area."

"When a trip only takes 10-15 minutes, I have to ride around in the van for one to one and a half hours. It's extremely exhausting. Also, wish we didn't have to call so far in advance."

"Not being able to get a ride on return trip. It seems when one travels on a daily basis this should be considered more, inasmuch as it is a necessity. Since the weather has gotten better I have to take a cab on the return trip at least twice a week."

"A number of the drivers have smoked and played the radio very loudly - and have been rude when I asked them not to smoke."

"I think it's unfair, I have to pay so much every day. I think people who use it every day, should pay less. Paying $36.00 a month is alot. I do like THE RIDE."

"Your vans seem to have no shock absorbers. When I get out of the van I'm quite shook up."

"All personnel have been very kind and courteous to me! Please thank them for me!"

"For the most part, I find the drivers excellent and very caring and helpful. I can't say enough about the women who answer the phones. They are really terrific. One in particular, and I believe her name is Gladys, has always been super in handling my calls and you are lucky to have her. She is great P.R. for the company."

"I think some drivers drive too fast, because I have some severe muscle spasms. They should be careful of pot holes. And they stop short, which is scary."

"Please figure out a way to insure that some drivers and passengers refrain from smoking! Also, most drivers are very courteous and helpful; a few, at night mostly, are not."

"THE RIDE is a wonderful service for senior citizens that haven't access or family to drive to doctors or other important errands. I for one am grateful for all favors. Beverly is most accommodating. Thank you."

"THE RIDE is great. I love it. It's wonderful help in my getting to the Pierce School in Brookline to play the piano for the elderly luncheon. All drivers do their best to be helpful and pleasant."

"To allow cigarette smoking in one portion of the van. Didn't know I could use service for educational trips."

"The young lady who answers calls is most courteous. The drivers are very courteous and helpful. It would be nice if one knew what the available hours are weekends as well as daily and if they can arrange for weekends."

"Thank you! It's friends like Beverly, Greg, Joe, Kenny, Timmy that make life worth living."

"If possible, would like to see service available on holidays; Christmas, for example."

"As with everything, there are times for praise and times for complaints. As a general rule, however, praise for THE RIDE far outweighs the complaints."

"The scheduling of various trips is ridiculous: people who go to East Boston and Winthrop during rush hour end up going to Charlestown first, which causes an extra 45-60 minutes on to every trip, plus the Charlestown people are generally 'no-shows' when the weather is good. However, we still have to wait up to 20 minutes for them."

"Would like THE RIDE to service South Boston and Dorchester again. Kit Clark has the franchise now, not organized. Lack of communication."

"Most of the drivers deserve a general driver-courtesy rating of 6 or more [out of 5]! I do not use the "Core Area Downtown Distributor" because I cannot walk easily (because of a stroke), and the transfer and lack of accessibility to the VA (Court Street) precludes such use."

"I should like to be able to use THE RIDE sometimes on 24-hours notice, but I found it not possible. I hope THE RIDE will be available for all of Newton so I can visit my sister in a nursing home. I am 90 years old."

"I would appreciate for THE RIDE to take me downtown to do some shopping. It is very difficult for me to rely on subway service because I can't get on the subway bus and the subway service is very bad."

"Jerry and Johnnie are very nice drivers, courteous and kind in every way. I like THE RIDE and appreciate it very much because it is very helpful to me. Keep up the good work. Thank you all very much."